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On the Priesthood

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N THE PRIESTHOOD

A TREATISE IN SIX BOOKS

By Saint John Chrysostom

Translated by the

EV. PATRICK BOYLE, C.M.

(*SECOND EDITION*)

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Let thy priests be clothed with justice, and let thy saints rejoice.—*Ps.* cxxxi, 9.

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PREFACE

EMINENT writers have treated of the dignity, the duties and the responsibility of the priesthood, but none has written on the subject with greater eloquence or greater unction than St. John Chrysostom. His treatise on the Priesthood, which is here presented in English, has ever been regarded as the most finished work of the greatest of Christian orators. It is written in the form of a dialogue, a form of imparting instruction which Plato adopted in the treatment of questions of philosophy, and which the Fathers of the Church made use of in the discussion of questions of Christian philosophy and Christian perfection. The personages in the dialogue are Chrysostom, a sketch of whose life is prefixed to this volume, and Basil. The latter was bishop of Raphanæa, a town in the neighbourhood of Antioch. His name as bishop of that see occurs amongst the signatures of the council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

The subject discussed is the Priesthood—*ἱερωσύνη*—in its highest grade with the fulness of orders, and with jurisdiction. According to the modern use of terms the treatise would be fitly entitled, "On the Episcopal Office." But priests also possess the power of offering sacrifice; they administer sacraments; they preach; they take part in pastoral work and in administration, subject to the authority of bishops; they are the co-operators of bishops. Therefore all that is said of the dignity, the duties, the dangers

and responsibilities of the Priesthood is also practical for them.

The occasion of the dialogue, as set forth in the first book of the treatise, was the consecration of Basil, and the escape of Chrysostom from the episcopal dignity. This event took place about A.D. 373. The treatise, however, on the Priesthood was written at a later date, when Chrysostom was a deacon (A.D. 381–386), or soon after his ordination as a priest.* It soon became widely known. St Jerome in his Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, a work written in the fourteenth year of the reign of Theodosius the Elder, that is, about A.D. 392, refers to it as follows: "Joannes Ecclesiæ Antiochenæ presbyter, Eusebii Emiseni Diodorique sectator, multa componere dicitur, de quibus περὶ ἱερωσύνης tantum legi." It has ever been regarded as a classic on the Priesthood. Suidas praises it for sublimity of thought, purity of diction, smoothness and elegance of style. Isidore of Pelusium writes of it as follows: "No one has read this book without feeling his heart inflamed with the love of God. It sets forth how venerable and how difficult is the office of the priesthood, and it shows how to fulfil it as it ought to be fulfilled. For John, Bishop of Byzantium, that wise interpreter of the divine secrets, the light of the whole Church, composed that work with so much skill and accuracy, that those who fulfil the priestly office as God desires, and those who fulfil it with negligence, find in it their virtues and faults portrayed."†

Useful as a work of spiritual instruction, the treatise on the Priesthood is also valuable as a testimony to the faith and discipline of the Church in the fourth

* Fessler, Inst. Patrolog. ss. 227. † Epist. 156, lib. i.

century. The teaching of Chrysostom regarding Baptism (Bk. III. 5, 6), Penance (II. 4), the Real Presence and the Sacrifice of the Mass (III. 4), Extreme Unction (III. 6), Viaticum (VI. 4), Holy Orders and the Dignity of the Priesthood (III. 4), is the teaching of the Catholic Church at the present day.

In the fourth century, as now, the Bishop was ruler, judge (III. 17), preacher (IV. 3, V. 1), administrator of the charity of the faithful (III. 16), protector of the poor, and guardian of those who aspired to Christian perfection (III. 17).

The treatise on the Priesthood has, therefore, an historical and doctrinal as well as a spiritual value.

The present translation has been made from the Greek text, as found in Migne's collection of Greek Patrology, vol. xlviii; and tom. i, pp. 621–692, of the Works of St Chrysostom. But whilst adhering to the text of Migne in preparing this second edition, the translator has found useful the edition of the περὶ ἱερωσύνης by J. Arbuthnot Nairn, Litt. D : B.D. (Cambridge, 1906).

PATRICK BOYLE, C.M.

Irish College, Paris.
May 24, 1910.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Life of St. John Chrysostom xiii

BOOK I

1. Basil excels all Chrysostom's friends 1
2. The harmony of Basil and Chrysostom. Their studies in all things similar 2
3. Their zeal unequal in the pursuit of the monastic life . 2
4. The project of both dwelling together 2
5. The entreaties of his mother 3
6. The ruse of Chrysostom regarding the ordination . 5
7. Basil's modest and plain accusation 7
8. Chrysostom's defence and attack 11
9. The great advantage of a well-timed ruse. General topic 13

BOOK II

1. The priesthood is the greatest proof of love for Christ 17
2. This ministry excels others 19
3. It requires a great and noble soul 21
4. The office is full of difficulty and danger . . . 22
5. I shrank from it for love of Christ 28
6. Proof of Basil's virtue and of his ardent charity . 29
7. It was not to insult the electors that I fled from ordination 30
8. By flight I saved them from blame 31

BOOK III

1. Those who suspect that I declined through pride have injured their own reputation 33
2. I did not fly through vanity 35
3. Had I desired vainglory I should rather have accepted the office 35

PAGE

4. The priesthood is august, and the priesthood of the new law more august than that of the old . . 36
5. The greatness of the power and dignity of priests . 37
6. They are the ministers of God's greatest gifts . . 40
7. Paul was awe-struck when he considered the priesthood 42
8. One who undertakes a public office is exposed to many faults unless he be very generous . . 44
9. He is overcome by vainglory and its evil consequences 44
10. It is not the priesthood that is to blame for this, but our own negligence 45
11. Ambition should be banished from the mind of a priest 47
12. A priest should be most wise 49
13. Other qualities besides mortification are requisite in a priest 50
14. Nothing darkens the mind so much as anger . . 51
15. Another dangerous enemy 55
16. What manner of man a priest exposed to such dangers ought to be 60
17. What a source of anxiety is the government of virgins 64

BOOK IV

1. Not only those who are eager to enter the clerical state, but also those who enter it by compulsion, are severely punished if they sin 71
2. Those who ordain the unworthy are liable to the same punishment as the ordained, even if they do not know the candidates 78
3. Priests should have great talent for preaching . . 82
4. They must be prepared to meet the attacks of all—of Greeks, Jews and heretics 84
5. They require great skill in argument . . . 87
6. The excellence of St. Paul in this respect . . . 88
7. He was remarkable, not only for his miracles, but also for his eloquence 90
8. He desires that we also should excel in this . . 93
9. If a priest does not possess this qualification, the faithful necessarily suffer great loss . . . 95

BOOK V

		PAGE
1.	Preaching requires great labour and diligence	97
2.	He who is appointed to that office should despise praise, and yet be eloquent	98
3.	If he does not possess both qualifications, he will be of no advantage to people	99
4.	He must most of all despise envy	99
5.	A learned man requires greater diligence than one who is not learned	101
6.	One should not quite despise, nor yet set great value on the unreasoned judgment of the people	102
7.	The preacher ought to have in view in his sermons to please God alone	103
8.	He who does not despise praise is exposed to many troubles	104

BOOK VI

1.	Priests are accountable even for the sins of others	107
2.	They require greater perfection than monks	108
3.	A monk enjoys greater repose than a bishop	110
4.	To intercede for the world, and other tremendous mysteries, are confided to priests	111
5.	A priest should be prepared for all things	114
6.	The life of a monk is not such a proof of virtue as the life of a good prelate	115
7.	The life of a monk is different from that of a bishop living in the world	115
8.	The practice of virtue is more easy for monks than for those who labour for the good of the people	117
9.	The suspicions of the people are not to be despised even when groundless	119
10.	It is no great difficulty to save one's own soul	121
11.	The sins of priests are more severely punished than those of the faithful	122
12.	Chrysostom's sorrow and fear at the prospect of the priesthood, shown by examples	123
13.	The assaults of the devil are more dreadful than any warfare	128

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

As an Orator and Administrator

The life and labours of St John Chrysostom belong to the general history of the Church; and the purpose of the present notice is not so much to give a history of his life as to dwell on some features of it, which show how he reduced to practice the lessons which he taught in his treatise on the Priesthood.

John was born in A.D. 344, at Antioch, the capital of Syria, a city which had numbered amongst its bishops St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and the illustrious martyr, St Ignatius, and of which St Luke was a citizen. His father, Secundus, a man of high rank, died while John was still an infant. His mother, Anthusa, to whose virtues he pays a tribute of filial piety in the first book on the Priesthood, had him educated with the greatest care, and under the best masters Antioch could provide. At the conclusion of his studies he had in contemplation to devote himself to the legal profession; and he took part in the public amusements which were then much frequented by men of the world. Abandoning the project of practising at the bar, he was enrolled amongst the lectors, and devoted himself to the service of the Church. In a short time he became so remarkable that, with his friend Basil, he was chosen to be promoted to the episcopate. Having escaped that dignity, as he relates in the first book on the Priesthood, he withdrew from the world, and

led a monastic life for a period of four years, after which he spent two additional years as a solitary. During those six years he practised such austerities that his health was seriously impaired, and he was obliged to return to his home in Antioch. Having recovered his health, he was ordained deacon in A.D. 381, and served the Chucrh in that capacity for five years. In A.D. 386 he was ordained priest, and twelve years later, the see of Constantinople having become vacant, he was chosen bishop of that great capital.

For six years he laboured with untiring energy for the Church confided to him. His zeal gave offence to many, and raised up enemies who procured from the Emperor an order for his banishment. In a short time he was recalled, but was again banished.

After three years spent in exile, worn out with suffering, he died at Comana in A.D. 406. Soon after his death his body was brought back with honour to Constantinople and subsequently translated to Rome. Posterity styled him Chrysostom, or of the Mouth of Gold, and the Church honours him as a saint and a doctor.

John, like his great model St Paul, was small in stature,* and of weak health. By natural disposition he was inclined to anger, to vanity and ambition.† But neither his infirmities nor his natural inclinations hindered him from becoming a model of sacerdotal zeal. As a preacher and as an ecclesiastical reformer his career is well worthy of attention.

During the twelve years he spent as a priest at

* Ad Stelech de Compunct. ii., 2.
† On the Priesthood, book III.

Antioch he was indefatigable in preaching. Every day in Lent and at least once a week at other periods of the year he preached to the people. The form of his discourses was homiletic. He preached no doubt frequently on special subjects; but in general his discourses were based upon the text of the books of the Old or of the New Testament. He first explained the literal meaning of the text, and then proceeded to the moral lessons which that meaning suggested. His sermons are solid and practical as well as eloquent. During the six years he spent as a monk and a solitary, his mind had been stored with sacred knowledge. His duties as a deacon for five years brought him into contact with the poor and the afflicted. Therefore he understood his audience; and the practical details into which he enters are so full that the whole civilisation and religious condition of the period lives in his discourses. Antioch was at the time a city of about two hundred thousand inhabitants, more than one-half of whom were Christians. That vast multitude idolized John and flocked to hear his discourses. Oftentimes their applause was so great that he was obliged to remonstrate with them. In his discourses we see them as they were, with their virtues and their faults. They were eager to hear the word of God, they frequented the Church, venerated the saints, made pilgrimages to shrines, and wore relics of the true cross and of the saints with reverence. But they lived in a city in which Pagan civilisation still survived; a city renowned for the beauty of its site on the Orontes, for its wealth, for the splendour of its streets and buildings, for its system of lighting, its baths, its circus, and its theatres. Its luxury was widely known, and Juvenal had stigmatized it as a type of one of those Asiatic cities whose influence flooded Rome

with corruption. "Jam pridem Syrus in Tiberim influxit Orontes."* In such surroundings the purity of Christian morals was endangered, and Chrysostom was ever earnest in warning the people against the attractions and the licence of the theatres, against luxury and display. He inculcated the obligation of almsgiving, and pleaded the cause of the poor with an earnestness and an eloquence that have never been surpassed. A distinguished man of letters, Villemain,† speaks thus of Chrysostom: "The combination of all the qualities of an orator: ease, pathos, sublimity, have rendered St John Chrysostom the greatest orator of the early Church, the most illustrious exponent of that memorable epoch. . . . The works of Chrysostom are the most complete course of sermons that antiquity has handed down to us. Throughout them you perceive a great knowledge of the heart of man, a charity truly evangelical. The whole Christian civilisation of the East lives again in the eloquent pages of the orator of Antioch."

Bossuet, no incompetent judge of true eloquence, looked on Chrysostom as the greatest of Christian orators. He calls him "the most illustrious of preachers, and beyond question the most eloquent that ever taught the Church." ‡ In another place he writes of him thus: "In Chrysostom we find exhortation, rebuke, strength, the method of treating examples from Scripture and developing every word and every circumstance. . . . His work on St Matthew is his best. His homilies on Genesis are

* Sat. iii. 62.

† Tableau de l'éloquence Chrétienne au quatrième siècle, p. 144.

‡ Sermon sur la parole de Dieu.

excellent, on St Paul admirable, those addressed to the people of Antioch full of eloquence." *

Cardinal Newman writes in the following terms of the eloquence of Chrysostom: "Great as was his gift of oratory, it was not by the fertility of his imagination or the splendour of his diction that he gained the surname of 'Mouth of Gold.' We shall be very wrong if we suppose that fine expressions, or rounded periods, or figures of speech were the credentials by which he claimed to be the first doctor of the East. His oratorical power was but the instrument by which he readily, gracefully, adequately, expressed—expressed without effort and with felicity—the keen feelings, the living ideas, the earnest practical lessons which he had to communicate to his hearers. He spoke because his head and his heart were brimful of things to speak about. His elocution corresponded to that strength and flexibility of limb, that quickness of eye, hand and foot, by which a man excels in manly games or in mechanical skill. It would be a great mistake, in speaking of it, to ask whether it was Attic or Asiatic, terse or flowing, when its distinctive praise was that it was natural. His unrivalled charm, as that of every really eloquent man, lies in his singleness of purpose, his fixed grasp of his aim, his noble earnestness." †

Eminent writers have contrasted Chrysostom with other great masters of eloquence, and have shown that he was pre-eminent as a popular preacher. Bossuet and Villemain contrast him with St Augustine, the greatest orator of the Western Church. "As to

* Avis sur le style et la lecture des Ecrivains et des Pères de l'Eglise pour former un orateur. *Œuvres de Bossuet*, vol. xi, edit. 1863,

† Historical Sketches, vol. ii, p. 234.

the Fathers," writes Bossuet, "I should wish to combine St Augustine and St Chrysostom. The former elevates the mind to great and subtle thoughts, the latter brings it down to the level of the capacity of the people. The former taken by himself would lead one to form a style too abstract, the latter a style too simple and too popular. . . . In St Augustine we find doctrine, in St Chrysostom exhortation, rebuke, vigour," *

"The preaching of St Chrysostom," says Villemain, "was learned and popular, that of Augustine short and familiar, suited to a laborious people. . . . You do not find in the Bishop of Hippo the beautiful language and the graceful eloquence of Christian Asia. He does not speak for Antioch or Cesarea. He is more grave and more unpolished. His discourses differ from the beautiful homilies of Chrysostom as much as the manners of the rude inhabitants of Hippo were removed from the arts and luxury of Constantinople. Less elevated, less brilliant than the Basils and the Chrysostoms, he possesses something more profound. He is less eloquent but more evangelical, for he speaks more to the heart of man." †

Cardinal Newman contrasts Chrysostom not only with the great doctors of the Church, but even with the great orators of antiquity, and finds in him a peculiar charm. "Nor is his eloquence of a kind to carry anyone away who has ever so little knowledge of the oratory of Greece and Rome. It is not force of words, nor cogency of arguments, nor harmony of composition, nor depth or richness of thought, which

* Avis sur la lecture des Ecrivains des Pères pour former un orateur.—*Loc. cit.*

† Tableau de l'éloquence Chrétienne au IV siècle, pp. 175, 446, 504.

constitute his power. Whence then has he this influence so mysterious, yet so strong? . . . That charm lies, as I have said, in his habit and his power of throwing himself into the mind of others, of imagining with exactness and with sympathy circumstances or scenes which were not before him, and of bringing out what he had apprehended in words direct and vivid as the apprehension. His page is like the *camera lucida*, which represents to us the living action and inter-action of all that goes on around us. . . . He writes as one who was ever looking out with sharp but kind eyes upon the world of men and their history, and hence he has always something to produce about them, new or old, to the purpose of his argument, whether from books or from the experience of life. Head and heart were full to overflowing with a stream of mingled 'wine and milk,' of rich vigorous thought and affectionate feeling. This is why his manner of writing is so rare and special." * Compared with the classic orators of Greece and Rome, Chrysostom is less studied and less artistic in the form of his discourses. He speaks not to bar nor senate, but to the people. Compared with St Augustine he is more polished, more vehement, and less abstract. Compared with Bossuet and the great Catholic orators of the seventeenth century, Chrysostom is no less eloquent. The difference between them is one of method. His was homiletic, less logical and scientific in structure, but more varied and popular. Theirs was formal and logical; each discourse was limited to the exposition of one subject, with arguments upon arguments marshalled with the order and precision of an army in battle array. There have been in

* Newman, *loc. cit.*, p. 285-289.

all ages eloquent preachers, but when all has been considered it may be safely affirmed that St John Chrysostom is the most eloquent, the most popular and most practical preacher that has ever flourished in the Church. Preaching was to him a labour of love. To be in the midst of the people, he spoke, not from the bishops' throne, but from the *ambo*, or reader's pulpit. His principle was that as fountains and rivers flow, even though there be none to draw water, so a preacher should preach, even if there were none to listen.* In his preaching the end he had in view was the moral reformation of the people. A single man, he said, inflamed with zeal is sufficient to reform a whole people. †

Admirable as a preacher, Chrysostom was no less zealous as an ecclesiastical ruler. At Constantinople he found the vices of Asia increased by the presence of a luxurious court, and the life of Christians in that great city is vividly described in the homilies which he delivered in that capital. Court influence had produced a spirit of worldliness and ambition among the clergy. Community life for women who made profession of virginity was not yet generally established, and living in the world they were exposed to distractions and to perils. Some amongst the monks, abandoning their solitude, had come to reside in the city, and depended on the liberality of the wealthy. St Chrysostom set himself to reform these abuses. He did not shrink from denouncing laxity of morals amongst the laity, nor did he spare the faults of the great, nor even of the Empress Eudoxia. His zeal excited opposition and made him many enemies.

* I, Sermon to the people of Antioch, 5, 12.
† I, Sermon on Lazarus, 1.

But by the great bulk of the people of Constantinople he was beloved as much as he had been by the people of Antioch. His love for the people and their affection for him is manifest throughout his sermons especially in his Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, which he preached at Constantinople. In the 3rd Homily on the Acts he says : "Nothing is so dear to me as you. I would desire a thousand times to be anathema if by that means I could convert your souls, so much dearer to me than life is your salvation. I am filled with joy when I hear anything good of you." Again, in the 44th Homily, he says : "You have never been wanting to me in anything. Were it possible you would have given me your eyes ; and on my part I was desirous to give you even my life together with the gospel. Our love is mutual." When Chrysostom was deposed and sent into exile the grief of the people was intense. When he was recalled they hastened to welcome his return. Boats filled with people, bearing lamps in their hands, covered the Bosphorus, and the shores resounded with the acclamations with which the multitude expressed their joy at the return of their archbishop. They brought him in triumph to his cathedral, and placed him on his episcopal throne. When he was banished a second time it required all his influence over them to prevent a sedition. He withdrew secretly. Wherever he went he was received with veneration. "When I came to Cappadocia and to Tauro-Cilicia," he writes, "the holy fathers, the monks and the virgins met me, shedding floods of tears. When they saw me going away into exile they burst into tears and said to each other : 'It were better that the sun should withdraw his light than that the mouth of John should be silent.'" *

* Letter cxxv, 125.

Nor was his zeal confined to the Church of Constantinople. He took means to propagate the gospel in Scythia, in Persia, and in Phœnicia. The Goths, whom Arianism had infected, became the object of his solicitude. He gave to those amongst them who were orthodox a church in Constantinople, and from time to time he went to preach to them, using an interpreter to translate his discourse to the audience as he delivered it.

In virtue of his metropolitan jurisdiction, he visited dioceses outside Constantinople to decide controversies, to maintain discipline, and to eradicate abuses. In this way he visited Ephesus, lesser Asia, Phrygia and Lycia. The Greek Church was then in union with the See of Rome, and, like a branch which abides in the vine, it continued to bear much fruit.

Preaching and administration left but little leisure to Chrysostom. What leisure he had he spent in retirement. He did not go out into society or give lavish entertainments, nor frequent the Court. Yet he did not escape censure. His austerity displeased, and his zeal offended many. He experienced all the annoyances which he describes so graphically in the third book on the Priesthood as the lot of bishops. An intrigue was formed for his deposition, and calumnies were invented, and at length at the Synod of the Oak he was deposed. But the history of his conflict with Eudoxia, his exile, his appeal to the Pope, and his death are well known, and need not be repeated here.

As a preacher he has been contrasted with St Augustine ; as an administrator he has been compared with St Ambrose. Both came into conflict with the civil power. Ambrose triumphed and Chrysostom died in exile. A learned writer contrasts them thus :

"He (Ambrose) knew how to govern men, John only knew how to direct souls." * But the circumstances in which Ambrose and Chrysostom were placed were widely different, and the same writer in another work has struck a truer note when he writes: "Ambrose had not arrayed against him a terrible coalition of clerical and worldly hatred. . . . The Roman Ambrose was of the race of statesmen. The honour of John of Antioch was to have been of the lineage of apostles." †

But the most valuable testimony to the pre-eminence of St Chrysostom comes from the Chair of St Peter. Leo XIII. (by a Decree dated 4th July, 1884) proposed to all preachers St John Chrysostom as the prince of Christian Orators, and as a model of sanctity: "Utpote qui christianorum oratorum *facile princeps*, ob aureum eloquentiæ flumen, invictum dicendi robur, vitaeque sanctitudinem summis laudibus ubique celebretur." ‡

More recently still Pius X, by a Decree dated 8th July, 1908, has declared and established St John Chrysostom the Celestial Patron of preachers: "Sanctitas porro Sua . . . praeclarum Ecclesiae Universae Doctorem, decusque, Sanctum Episcopum Joannem Chrysostomum, oratorum sacrorum coelestem Patronum Apostolica auctoritate Sua declaravit et constituit."

May the example of St Chrysostom and his patronage cause the word of God to run and be glorified. §

* St J. Chrysostom, par A. Puech, p. 196. 3rd edit.

† Un reformateur de la société Chrétienne au IV siècle. St Jean Chrysostom, par A. Puech, Paris, 1891, p. 44.

‡ Acta S. Sedis, vol. xli, p. 594-95.

§ 2 Thess. iii, 1.

ON THE PRIESTHOOD

A TREATISE IN SIX BOOKS

By Saint John Chrysostom

BOOK I

1. Basil excels all Chrysostom's friends.
2. The harmony of Basil and Chrysostom. Their studies in all things similar.
3. Their zeal unequal in the pursuit of the monastic life.
4. The project of both dwelling together.
5. The entreaties of his mother.
6. The ruse of Chrysostom regarding the ordination
7. Basil's modest and plain accusation.
8. Chrysostom's defence and attack.
9. The great advantage of a well-timed ruse. General topic.

1. I HAD many sincere and true friends, who understood the laws of friendship well, and observed them faithfully. Amongst them was one who far surpassed the others in friendship for me, and strove to outstrip the rest as much as they excelled my ordinary well-wishers. He was ever by my side, for we pursued the same studies and had the same teachers; our earnestness and application to our literary pursuits was the same, and our aspirations alike and inspired by the same objects. And this harmony lasted not only while we frequented the schools, but it was manifest

even when we had left them, and had to deliberate on what course of life it was best for us to adopt.

2. There were other circumstances, too, which rendered our union constant and steadfast. For neither could assume superiority over the other by reason of the importance of his native place; my means were not excessively great, nor was he in a condition of great poverty; but the extent of our means was in keeping with the similarity of our purposes. Our families were of equal rank, and everything was favourable to our desires.

3. But when that excellent man was about to embrace a monastic life and true wisdom, the balance was no longer equal; his scale being lighter was raised aloft, while, entangled as I was in worldly desires, I weighed down mine, and, loading it with the vanities of youth, forced it to remain below. In these circumstances our friendship continued in other respects steadfast as before, but our intercourse was broken off; for, as our pursuits were different, it was not possible for us to dwell together. But as soon as I too raised my head somewhat above the billows of a worldly life, he received me with open arms; yet not even so were we able to attain to our former equality. For as he had preceded me in time and had manifested great ardour, he was also elevated to a height far above me.

4. But as he was kind and valued my friendship much, he withdrew from all others and constantly associated with me, as had been his desire formerly; but, as I have said, he was hindered by my negligence. For it was not possible that a man who attended the law courts and was passionately fond of the entertainments in the theatre should frequently associate with one who was devoted to his books and took no part

in public life. When these hindrances had ceased, he admitted me to share his manner of life, and at once proposed a project which he had conceived long before; and he did not permit himself to be absent from me for the least portion of the day, but kept constantly urging that we should both leave our own homes and dwell together. He prevailed upon me, and the project was taken in hand.

5. But the constant entreaties of my mother prevented me from doing him that favour, or rather from receiving that benefit from him. For when she perceived that I was deliberating on this project, she took me by the hand and brought me into her own room, and making me sit down by the bed where she gave me birth, she burst into a flood of tears, and added words more affecting than tears, giving expression to her lamentations in the following terms:

My dear son, said she, as God so willed it, I was not allowed to possess long your virtuous father. For his death, which took place soon after you were born, left you an orphan and me prematurely a widow with the trials of widowhood, which they alone can understand who have experienced them; for no words can describe the flood of affliction which a young woman, who has but recently left her father's house, and is yet inexperienced in business, endures when she is suddenly overwhelmed with extreme grief and compelled to undertake cares beyond her age and sex. For she is obliged to correct the domestics for their negligence, and watch to hinder their infidelity, and guard against the intrigues of relatives, and resist courageously the exactions and harshness of the tax-gatherers. Should the deceased have left a child, if it be a girl it occasions much solicitude to the mother, yet unaccompanied by expense or alarm.

But if it be a boy it brings upon her every day endless fears and anxieties, to say nothing of the expense she is obliged to incur in her desire to give him a liberal education. Yet none of these things induced me to contract a second marriage, nor to bring a second husband into your father's house; but I remained in the tempest and the din, and I did not fly from the fiery furnace of widowhood; and I was aided first of all by strength ftom above. And it was no small consolation to me in those trials to look frequently on your countenance and to possess in you a true and living likeness of the deceased. For this reason, when you were yet an infant and still unable to speak, a time when children especially give joy to their parents, you were a great comfort to me. Nor can you lay it to my charge that, though I bore bereavement with courage, I wasted your paternal estate owing to the hardships of widowhood, a fate which I know to have befallen many who had the misfortune to be left orphans. For I have preserved it unimpaired, though I spared no expense necessary for your reputation, drawing for that purpose on my own property and on the dowry I brought from my father's house. And do not imagine that I say this by way of reproach, but for all this I ask you for only one favour: do not make me once more a widow, nor awaken a grief that has been stilled. Await my death; perhaps in a short time I shall pass away. For the young may hope to live to an advanced age, but we who are old have nothing to look forward to but death. When you have laid me in the earth, by the bones of your father, then set out on long pilgrimages, sail on whatever sea you please. There will be no one then to hinder you. But while I live, have patience to live with me; and do not lightly and rashly offend

God by involving in so many sorrows one has done you no wrong. And if you can charge me with forcing you into the cares of the world, or compelling you to manage your own affairs, respect neither the laws of nature, nor education, nor family life, nor anything else, but fly from me as from a traitor and an enemy. But if I take every means to secure to you much leisure in your passage through life, let this bond at least detain you with me. For though you say you have many friends, none of them will enable you to enjoy so much freedom ; for to none of them is your reputation so dear as to me.

6. This and much more did my mother say to me, and I repeated it to that excellent man. But he was so far from being disconcerted by these words, that he persisted the more in urging his former request.

While we were thus engaged, he continually pressing his request and I not assenting, all of a sudden a rumour that arose filled us both with alarm. The rumour was that we were to be promoted to the * episcopal dignity. As soon as I heard that report, I was seized with fear and perplexity : with fear lest I should be taken against my will, and with perplexity, asking myself many a time how it had occurred to those men to entertain such an idea about us, for looking to myself I found that I possessed no qualification for such a dignity. But that excellent man came to me privately, and informed me of the rumour, as though I had not heard it, and requested that in this, as on former occasions, we should display unity of action and of purpose ; saying that he was ready to

* The common reading is *Τό τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς*. Another reading is *Τῆς ἱερωσύνης*.

follow whatever course I should adopt, either in declining or submitting.

Perceiving then his purpose, and believing I would inflict an injury on the general interest of the Church, if on account of my own unfitness, I should deprive the flock of Christ of a young man so virtuous, and so well qualified to govern men, I did not disclose to him the resolution I had formed on this subject, though I had never before concealed from him any of my plans. But I told him we ought to defer to another occasion a decision on this subject, as there was then no urgency; and I soon persuaded him not to be concerned about the matter; and I gave him to understand that as far as I was concerned I would be of the same mind as he, should any such contingency arise. Not long afterwards the person who was to ordain us arrived; I concealed myself, and he knowing nothing of this, was brought forward, as if for another reason, and received the yoke, hoping from my promises to him that I would certainly follow, or rather thinking he was following in my footsteps. For some of those present on the occasion, seeing that he was vexed at being taken, deceived him, exclaiming that it was strange that the person who seemed most intractable (meaning me) had submitted with much docility to the decision of the Fathers, while he, who was much more discreet and gentle, was intractable, and sought vainglory, by bounding and shying and objecting. He yielded to these remonstrances, and when he heard that I had escaped, he came to me in great distress, and sitting down by me, he tried to speak. But in his indignation he was unable to describe the violence he had suffered, for when he opened his lips he could not speak, as sorrow hindered his utterance. Seeing him bathed in tears, and under

the influence of deep emotion, and knowing the cause, I laughed for joy, and taking his hand I began to kiss it, and I praised God that my stratagem had ended well, and in the way I had always desired. When he saw that I was joyful and glad, he understood that he had been previously deceived by me, and he was hurt and vexed the more.

7. Then recovering somewhat from his emotion, he said: Although you treat my interests with contempt, and make no account of me (and I know not why), you ought at least to have some concern for your own reputation. For you have set everybody talking, and all say that it was through a spirit of vainglory that you declined this ministry, and there is none to defend you from the charge. As for me, I can no longer appear in public, there are so many who accost me and blame me every day. For whenever our friends see me anywhere in the city they take me aside and lay most of the blame on me. Since you knew his purpose, they say, for nothing that concerns him could have been unknown to you, you ought not to have kept it secret, but you should have made it known to us, and we would not have been at a loss for means to capture him. Now I feel ashamed and, blush to tell them that I did not know that you had long entertained this purpose, lest they should suppose that our friendship is unreal. For if such is the fact, as it really is, and you yourself cannot deny, after what you have done; it would have been becoming to hide our troubles from the public who have a favourable opinion of us. I am loth, then, to tell them the truth, how matters stand with us. For the rest I am obliged to be silent, to cast down my eyes, to avoid meeting people, and to keep out of the way. For though I should be acquitted of the former charge, I must

needs be convicted of untruthfulness; for people will never believe that you have placed Basil in the rank of those who may not know what concerns you. But of this I reck little, since such is your pleasure. But how can I endure the disgrace in other respects? For some accuse you of arrogance and others of vanity, and those, who are most unsparing in their charges, accuse us of both, and moreover they add the charge of insolence towards those who elected us; and they say they would have been served right, had they got worse treatment at our hands. For they passed over many deserving men, and straightway promoted to a dignity such as they could never have dreamt of obtaining, mere boys, who, until the other day were immersed in the business of the world, because forsooth they had put on a serious look, and dressed in black, and assumed an air of affected gravity. Those on the other hand who, from their earliest youth to extreme old age, have practised a life of abnegation, remain in the rank of subjects; and men young enough to be their children, who do not even know the rules to be observed in this ministry, rule over them. This and more they are constantly laying to our charge. As for me I know not what reply to make, and I beg of you to tell me. For I do not believe that in flying as you have done you have acted foolishly and without reason, nor that you entertained ill will towards men of such rank; but I think you adopted this line of conduct with deliberation and reflection, hence I infer you have something to say in your justification. Tell me, then, if you have any valid defence to make in answer to your accusers. For the injustice with which you have treated me, I require no satisfaction, either for your having deceived and betrayed me or for the advantages you enjoyed from me in the past.

For I placed my soul, so to say, in your hands, but you acted towards me with as much artifice as if you had to guard against an enemy.

Now, if you thought this decision * beneficial, you ought not to have declined the advantage of it yourself; but if you thought it hurtful, you should have rescued me from harm, for you always said you valued me more than others But you took every means to make me fall into the snare, and you had recourse to deceit and insincerity in dealing with one who was wont to speak and act towards you in all matters simply and without guile. But as I have said, I do not now lay this to your charge, nor do I reproach you for the isolation to which you have reduced me by breaking off our intercourse, from which on many occasions we derived no ordinary pleasure and profit. All this I pass over, and bear it in silence, and in the spirit of meekness, not because your offence against me has been slight, but because from the day on which I entered into relations of friendship with you, I made it a rule for myself to require no explanation from you for any cause of pain you might give me. Now, that you have done me no small injury, you yourself will understand if you but call to mind what used to be said about us, both by the public and by ourselves, namely, that our union and mutual friendship would be a great advantage and protection to us. And everybody used to say that our harmony would be useful to many others besides. For my part I did not think, as far as I was concerned, I should be of service to anyone; but I used to say that we should derive no inconsiderable advantage from our friendship, inasmuch as if attacked we should be invincible. And

* *i.e.*, to promote us to orders.

I never ceased reminding you of this. The times, I said, are perilous, enemies are numerous, genuine charity is extinct, pernicious envy has taken its place; "we walk in the midst of snares, and tread on the battlements of cities." * Many are ready on every side to rejoice should any mishap befall us. There are none or but few to sympathize with us. Take care lest, if we separate, we bring upon us the ridicule of the public, and what is worse than ridicule, loss. "A brother that is helped by a brother is like a strong city, and like a kingdom strengthened by bars." † Do not undo this friendship, nor sever this bar. This and more I kept constantly saying, never suspecting anything amiss, but fancying your sentiments towards me were quite staunch; but while superfluously endeavouring to heal the strong, I was, it seems, without being aware of it, giving medicine to one that was sick.

But wretched man that I am, not even so did I gain any advantage, nor derive any profit from such excessive precaution. For casting aside all these considerations, and heeding them not, you launched me as a vessel without ballast on the boundless sea, regardless of the stormy billows I should have to face. And should it ever be my lot to be assailed by calumny, or ridicule, or insolence of any kind, or insult—and such must often be the case—to whom shall I fly? to whom shall I make known my distress? who will undertake my defence, and check those who molest me, and make them desist? Who will comfort me and help me to bear the rudeness of others? No

* Ecclus. ix, 20, according to the Septuagint. The Vulgate reading is: "For thou art going in the midst of snares, and walking upon the arms of them that are grieved."

† Prov. xviii, 19. The Vulgate reading is: "And judgments are like the bars of cities."

one, since you have withdrawn from this awful warfare, and cannot so much as hear my cries. Do you understand the evil you have done? Now that you have struck the blow, do you perceive how deadly a wound you have inflicted? But let us pass this over, for it is no longer possible to undo what has been done, nor to find an escape where there is none. What shall I say to the public? What reply shall I make to their charges?

8. Chrysostom. Be of good cheer, said I, for I am prepared to render an account not merely on that head, but I will try to justify myself to the best of my ability, even on the point on which you require no explanation; and if you allow me, I will begin my defence with that. For as my dearest friend treats me with such consideration that he does not even wish to call me to account for the wrong he says I have done him, but heedless of what regards himself is concerned only for me, it would be strange and incomprehensible in me to be concerned about the opinion of the public, and to leave nothing undone to put a stop to their censures, and yet to be unable to persuade him that I have done him no wrong, and to seem to treat him with a negligence greater than the regard he has manifested towards me. What injury, then, have I ever done you? Since it is from that point I have decided to embark on my defence; is it that I deceived you and concealed my purpose from you? But it was for your own benefit you were deceived, and for that of those to whom by my artifice I gave you up. Now if artifice is always wrong, and is never lawful in case of necessity, I am ready to submit to any penalty you please, or rather, as you would never consent to punish me, I will inflict upon myself as great a penalty as the judges are wont

to impose on the guilty when their accusers have proved their charges. But if it is not wrong in all cases, but is good or bad according to the intention of those who use it, cease charging me with having deceived you, and show that I did it with evil intent. Until that is done, instead of blaming and accusing a man for having had recourse to artifice, all reasonable men should praise him for it. For the advantage arising from a timely and well-meant artifice is so great that oftentimes many have been punished for not having had recourse to it. If you examine the case of the most famous commanders that ever lived, you will find that their greatest victories were due to artifice, and that those who conquered by means of it are praised more highly than those who conquered in open conflict For the latter defeated their foes at the cost of great loss in men and money, so that they derived no profit from their victory, but though victorious they suffered almost as much as the vanquished by reason of loss of men and waste of treasure. Moreover, the vanquished do not permit them to enjoy all the glory of the victory, for no small share of it falls to the conquered, since they were victorious in mind and vanquished only in body, so that had it been possible for them, though wounded,* not to have fallen, and had not death put a stop to their efforts, they would not have desisted from their deeds of valour. On the other hand, he who succeeds in conquering by artifice not only involves his enemies in disaster, but covers them with ridicule. Nor do both sides receive equal praise for prudence in this case, as in the former both received equal praise for valour; but the prize of victory

* Another reading is, "as they would have wished."

belongs entirely to the conquerors, and what is by no means least important, they secure for their country the joy of victory unalloyed. For prudence is not like abundance of money and a large army, for these by being utilized in war are wont to be exhausted and to fail their possessors, whereas the more prudence is exercised the more it increases. And it is not only in time of war, but also in time of peace that artifice is found to be very necessary, and that not in public affairs only, but also in the household, a husband must use it towards his wife, and a wife towards her husband, a father towards his children, a friend towards his friends, and even children towards their parents. The daughter of Saul, for instance, could never have saved her husband from her father's hands, but by deceiving him. And her brother had to have recourse to the same means as his wife had made use of in order to save him when again in danger.

Basil. Basil replied: All this has no application to me. I am not a personal enemy nor a public foe, nor an evil doer, but quite the contrary. For I always confided all my interests to your decision, and followed the course which you advised.

9. Chrysostom. But, my dearest and best of friends, it was for that reason I already said that it was lawful to use artifice, not only in war and towards foes, but also in peace, and towards one's dearest friends. Now that you may understand how useful artifice is, not only to those who deceive, but also to those on whom it is practised, go and ask any physician how medical men cure their patients of their maladies. He will tell you that they do not rely on their medical skill alone, but that they sometimes call artifice to their aid, and by its assistance restore their patients

to health. When the temper of the patient or the difficult nature of the disease is unfavourable to their plans, then physicians put on the mask of artifice to conceal, as is done on the stage, what they are really doing. If you will permit me, I will give you an instance of the ruses which, as I have heard, medical men employ. A certain person fell sick of a violent fever. The fever increased, and the patient refused everything calculated to allay it, and he desired and earnestly requested all who came to see him to give him pure wine, and so enable him to satisfy his pernicious craving. Now had this desire been gratified, not only would the fever have increased, but the poor patient would have been rendered delirious. When skill had failed, and when all its schemes had been tried without success, artifice entering on the scene proved to be of such efficacy as I shall presently relate. For the doctor took an earthenware vessel, fresh from the furnace, and filled it with wine. Then drawing off the wine, he filled the vessel with water, and ordering the sick man's room to be darkened with curtains, that the light might not discover the artifice, he gave him the vessel to drink from, as though it were full of pure wine. Deceived by the odour, before he took the vessel in his hands, the patient did not wait to examine what was given him, but yielding to the deception, misled by the darkness, and urged on by his thirst, he drank with great avidity what was offered him, and being satiated, was relieved of the fever and escaped the impending danger. Do you understand then the advantage of artifice? Were I to relate all the ruses physicians employ, I should never have done. And not only those who heal the body, but those who cure the maladies of the soul often have recourse to this remedy. It was thus the

Blessed Paul gained over many thousands of the Jews; * for the same reason he who threatened the Galatians † that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing, circumcised Timothy. ‡ For the same motive he was subject to the law, though he accounted as loss the justice of the law, as compared with the faith of Christ. § The power of artifice is great, provided it be not used with deceitful intent. Rather it should not be called artifice, but a kind of tact and prudence, and an art capable of finding many ways out of difficulties, and of correcting the faults of the soul. For I should never call Phinees ‖ a murderer, though with one blow he slew two; nor Elias, on account of the one hundred men and their captain, ¶ nor on account of the torrent of blood he shed in the slaughter of those who sacrificed to demons. ** For were we to admit that, and consider the mere acts apart from the intention with which they were performed, we should pronounce Abraham †† guilty of the murder of his son, and should accuse his grandson ‡‡ and his descendant §§ of malice and fraud; for by artifice the former obtained the right of primogeniture, and the latter transferred the wealth of the Egyptians to the army of the Israelites. But such is certainly not the fact. Away with such temerity! For not only do we exonerate them from blame, but we admire them for what they did, since even God Himself has praised them for it. That man indeed is justly called a deceiver who uses artifice for an unjust end, but not the man who acts thus

* Acts xxi, 20.
† Gal. v, 2.
‡ Acts xvi, 3.
§ Phil. iii, 7.
‖ Numb. xxv, 7.
¶ 4 Kings i, 10.
** 3 Kings xviii, 34.
†† Gen. xxii, 3; xxvii, 19. Exod. xi, 2.
‡‡ Jacob.
§§ Moses.

from an upright motive. If it is often necessary to practice deception and to derive great advantage thereby, while the man who acts with simplicity has often done great injury to the person whom he has not deceived.

BOOK II

1. The priesthood is the greatest proof of love for Christ
2. This ministry excels others.
3. It requires a great and noble soul.
4. The office is full of difficulty and danger.
5. I shrank from it for love of Christ.
6. Proof of Basil's virtue and of his ardent charity.
7. It was not to insult the electors that I fled from ordination.
8. By flight I saved them from blame.

That it is lawful for a good end to have recourse to the power of artifice, or rather that to act thus ought not to be called artifice, but a laudable species of tact, I might have shown at greater length; but as what I have said is enough for my purpose, it is tiresome and disagreeable to prolong the subject further. For the rest it would be your place to show that in this I have not acted for your benefit.

Basil. What advantage, tell me, said Basil, have I derived from your tact or wisdom, or whatever else you like to call it, that I may be convinced that I have not been injured by you?

1. John. What greater advantage can there be, said I, than to be engaged in those things which are the greatest proof of love for Christ, as He Himself has declared. For addressing the chief of the apostles, He says: "Peter, lovest thou Me?" On his replying in the affirmative, He added: "If thou lovest Me,

feed My sheep." * The Master asks the disciple whether he loves Him, not to ascertain this from him—for how could He, since He searches the hearts of all?—but in order to teach us how much He has at heart the government of His flock. As this is evident, it must also be evident how great and unspeakable a reward is laid up for him who labours in those things which Christ prizes so highly. When we ourselves see anyone taking care of our domestics or our cattle, though they can all be purchased with money, we regard the care of them as a proof of love for ourselves. What reward then will He give to those who feed His flock, since He purchased it, not with money or the like, but by His death, and gave His blood as the price of His flock? Wherefore when the disciple said, "Thou knowest, Lord, that I love Thee," and when He took him whom He loved to be the witness of His love, the Saviour did not stop here, but added the mark of His love. For His object, then, was not to prove to us how much Peter loved Him (for of this we had many proofs), but to show Peter and us all how much He loves His Church, that we too might exercise great zeal on its behalf. Why did God not spare His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up? † That He might reconcile to Himself those who were His enemies and make them His peculiar people. Why did He shed His Blood? To purchase those sheep which He entrusted to Peter and his successors. Justly then did Christ say, "Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath appointed over His family?" ‡ These words again express doubt, but the speaker who

* John xxi, 15. † Rom. viii, 32; John iii, 16.
‡ Matt. xxiv, 45.

uttered them entertained no doubt. Just as when He asked Peter whether he loved Him, He put the question not to ascertain the affection of His disciple, but to show the magnitude of His own love; so now, when He says, "Who is a faithful and wise servant?" He speaks not as though He knew not who is a faithful and wise servant, but to show how rare such qualities are, as well as the greatness of this office. See, then, how great also is the reward: "He shall place him over all His goods." *

2. Do you still question whether it was not for your advantage that I deceived you, since you are to be set over all the things that belong to God, and are engaged in an office by the fulfilment of which the Lord declared that Peter would far surpass the rest of the apostles? "Peter," says He, "lovest thou Me more than these?" Yet He might have said to him: "If thou lovest Me, practise fasting, lie on the bare ground, watch continually, protect the oppressed, be a father to the orphan, and as a husband to their mother." But, passing over all these things, what does He say? "Feed My sheep." For the aforesaid works many of the faithful, both men and women, may easily perform. But when there is question of setting a pastor over the Church and confiding to him the care of so many souls, let the whole female sex and the majority of men withdraw from so great a task. Let such be brought forward as surpass all others, and who are as much, or more, above them in spiritual excellence as Saul surpassed the whole Hebrew nation in stature.† And here do not seek for a measure of stature greater from the shoulders and upwards, but let the difference

* Matt. xxiv, 47. † 1 Kings x, 23.

between the pastor and his flock be as great as that which exists between senseless beasts and men endowed with reason; to say no more, for the risk is greater. For one who loses sheep either by reason of ravening wolves, or the attack of robbers, or from pestilence, or some other mishap, may perchance, be pardoned by the owner of the flock; and if compensation be required, the fine will be only in money. But the man to whom the rational flock of Jesus Christ is entrusted is liable, in the first place, to a penalty, not in money only but in his own soul, if the sheep be lost. Moreover, the contest he has to endure is greater and more difficult; for his warfare is not against wolves, nor his alarm about robbers, nor his anxiety to ward off pestilence from the flock. Against whom, then, is the warfare? Against whom is the battle? Listen to the blessed Paul, who says: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; and the rulers * of the darkness of this world, against the spirits of wickedness in high places." † Do you perceive then the dreadful number of the enemy and their fierce array, armed not with steel, but by nature tempered to suffice for every kind of armour? Do you wish to behold another fierce and cruel army lying in ambush to attack the flock? This you will perceive from the same vantage ground; for he who described the above-mentioned foes, points out to us these also in the following terms: "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, adultery, uncleanness, immodesty, idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, contentions,

* The Vulgate reading is, "the rulers of the world of this darkness."

† Eph. vi, 12.

emulations, wraths, quarrels, detractions, tale-bearing, indignations, dissensions, and many more," * for he did not enumerate all, but from these he gave us to infer the rest. In the case of the shepherd of irrational animals, when those who purpose to destroy the herd see the shepherd flying, they cease attacking him, and are satisfied with carrying off the sheep; but in our case, even though they have captured the entire flock, they do not desist from their attacks upon the shepherd; but they become more bold, and never cease until they either overcome him or are themselves defeated. Moreover, the ailments of animals are manifest, be they hunger or contagion or wounds or any other distemper, and this contributes not a little to the cure of the sufferers. There is another feature too of much importance, which expedites the cure of their distempers. What, pray, is that? The shepherds have great power to compel the sheep to undergo treatment, even though they submit with reluctance. For it is easy to bind them, should it be necessary to apply the cautery or the knife, or to keep them shut up in the fold, should that be advisable, or to change one pasture for another, or keep them from water, and everything else they think conducive to the health of the animals they apply with the greatest ease.

3. But in the case of men, first of all it is no easy matter for a man to perceive their infirmities. "For no man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him." † How then is it possible to apply a remedy to a malady when one does not know its nature, and when in many cases one cannot even see whether the patient is ill? And even when

* Gal. v, 19, 20, and 2 Cor. xii, 20. † 1 Cor. ii, 11.

the malady is manifest it occasions great difficulty. For it is not possible to treat all men with the same facility as the shepherd treats a sheep. For in this case too it is necessary to bind and keep away from pastures, to use the cautery and the knife; but the power of accepting the treatment rests not with him who applies it, but with the patient, and knowing this that admirable man said to the Corinthians: "We do not exercise dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." *

For to Christians least of all is it allowable to correct the faults of sinners by violence. Secular judges indeed use great authority in dealing with malefactors, when they lay hold on them in virtue of the laws, and they hinder them even against their will from following their usual course of life; but as for us, it behoves us to correct such persons not by constraint, but by persuasion. For the laws do not confer on us so much power to restrain sinners; and even if they did, we could not use the power to any purpose, since God crowns not those who refrain from evil by necessity, but those who refrain from it by their own choice. Hence it requires much skill to persuade those who are ill to submit to treatment at the hands of priests, and not merely to submit, but to be grateful to them for their care. For if the patient struggles when bound—and he can do so if he pleases—the evil becomes worse. If he rejects words of admonition, which cut like steel he inflicts on himself, by his contempt, an additional wound, and the treatment becomes the occasion of a more dangerous malady. For no man can be cured by compulsion against his will.

4. What then can be done? For if you treat

* 2 Cor. i, 23.

gently a patient who needs a severe operation, and do not make a deep incision when necessary, you remove a part and leave a part of the sore. But if you make the requisite incision unsparingly, it often happens that the patient, distracted by pain, casts away at once both remedy and bandages, and throws himself headlong, breaking the yoke and bursting the bands. * I could mention many instances of persons who were driven to desperation because a satisfaction proportioned to their sins was required of them. For you must not indiscreetly impose satisfaction in proportion to the sins, but you must also take into consideration the disposition of the sinner, lest by trying to mend what was torn, you make the rent the greater, and while striving to raise the fallen you make the fall the greater. † The weak and the dissipated, and such as are entangled in the pleasures of the world or are proud of their birth and rank, if quietly and gradually turned away from the things wherein they have sinned, may be delivered in part at least if not entirely from the faults which held them in bondage. But if you apply a severe correction, you deprive them even of this smaller improvement. For once the soul has been driven to cast away shame, it becomes callous, and neither yields to exhortation nor is moved by threats nor influenced by benefits, but it becomes far worse than that city which the prophet reproached, saying: "Thou hast a harlot's forehead; towards all

* Jerm. ii, 20; v, 5.

† St. Chrysostom lays down the same principle here as is laid down by the Roman Ritual for the guidance of confessors: "Postremo salutarem et convenientem satisfactionem, quantum spiritus et prudentia suggesserint, injungat, habita ratione status, conditionis, sexus et ætatis, et item dispositionis pœnetentium."—*Rit. Rom. de Sacram. Pœnitentiæ.*

thou hast acted unblushingly." * Hence the pastor needs great wisdom and circumspection to examine the state of the soul from every point of view. For as there are many who are driven to arrogance, and fall into despair of salvation by reason of their being unable to endure sharp remedies, so there are some, who through not having made sufficient satisfaction for their sins, are rendered careless and become much worse and are led to fall into greater sins. Therefore, the priest should leave none of these things unexamined, but should enquire into everything carefully, and do his duty correspondingly, that his zeal may not be in vain. And this is not his only trouble; he has also great trouble in uniting again to the Church members who had been cut off. A shepherd is followed by his sheep wherever he goes, and, if one of them turns aside from the straight road, and browses on sterile and steep places, it is enough for him to call a little louder to bring back the strayed sheep, and unite it to the herd. But if a man strays from the right faith, the pastor requires great diligence, patience and perseverance. For it is not possible to bring him back by force or to compel him by fear; he must be brought back by persuasion to the truth from which he had fallen away. One must, therefore, have generosity of mind not to lose courage or despair of the salvation of those who have gone astray; and often call to mind these words: "If perchance God may give them repentance to know the truth, that they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil." † For this reason the Lord said to his disciples, "Who is the faithful and wise servant?" For he that attends to his own perfection, profits himself only; but the

* Jer. iii, 3. † 2 Tim. ii, 25.

benefit of the pastoral office extends to all the people. He indeed who bestows alms on the poor, or in any other way defends the injured, benefits his neighbour to some extent, but so much less than the priest, as the body is inferior to the soul. With reason, then, did our Lord say that zeal for his flock was a proof of love for himself.

BASIL. But do you, said he, not love Christ?

CHRYSOSTOM. I do love Him, and I will never cease to love Him, but I am afraid to offend Him whom I love.

BASIL. What riddle could be more obscure than this? For Christ enjoined on him who loves Him to feed His sheep; but you say that you do not feed them because you love Him who gave the injunction.

CHRYSOSTOM. What I say is no riddle, but very clear and plain. For if I declined the office, though competent to fulfil it as Christ desired, I should be at a loss how to account for what I say; but since my spiritual weakness renders me unfit for that ministry, how does my assertion merit blame? For I am afraid lest, after having received the flock of Christ in an healthy and sound condition, I should harm it by my negligence, and draw upon myself the indignation of Him who so loves it, that He delivered Himself up as the price of its salvation.

BASIL. You are speaking in jest. For if you spoke in earnest, I know not how you could better prove that I am justly pained, than by what you have said to dispel my sorrow. For, though I knew already that you had deceived and betrayed me, now that you have attempted to refute the charge, I understand it better, and I clearly see to what a pass you have brought me. If you withdrew from so great a ministry, because you knew that your soul was not

equal to so great a task, you ought first to have rescued me from it; even though I eagerly aspired to it; to say nothing of the fact that I left the decision of the whole affair to you. On the contrary, looking only to your own interest, you neglected mine, and would that you had neglected it! If you had, it would be matter for satisfaction. Instead of that, you plotted that I might be easily caught by those who sought me. Nor can you take refuge in the excuse that you were deceived by the opinion of the public, and led to believe that I was possessed of great and extraordinary merit. For I am not distinguished nor conspicuous, and, even if such were the fact, the opinion of the public should not be preferred to truth. If, by our companionship you had never had experience of what I am, you might have some reasonable excuse for giving your decision according to public opinion; but since no one knows me so well as you (for you know my disposition better than my parents who brought me up), what plausible reason can you allege to convince your hearers that you did not deliberately cast me into this danger? But let us pass over that at present. I do not require you to stand your trial on this point. But tell me, what defence can we make against our accusers?

Chrysostom. By no means, said I, shall I proceed to that, until I clear myself in what concerns yourself, even though you should repeatedly urge me to refute the other charges. You say that ignorance would have secured me pardon, and acquitted me of all blame, if, being unacquainted with you, I had brought you to this pass; but that, as I betrayed you not through ignorance, but with full knowledge, I am therefore deprived of every reasonable excuse and valid justification. Now I maintain the very con-

trary. Why? Because a matter of such importance requires much consideration; and because he who puts forward a man as qualified for the priestly office should not be satisfied with the voice of the public merely, but in addition he should himself, most of all and before all, examine the qualities of the candidate. For when the blessed Paul says: "Moreover he must have a good testimony of them who are without," * he does not exclude a careful and searching examination, nor does he set down that testimony as the chief test in the examination of so important a matter. For having spoken first of many other tests he placed this last, to show that one ought not to be satisfied with it in such decisions; but that it too should be taken into account along with the rest. For it often happens that the opinion of the public is mistaken; but when a careful investigation has been made there is no danger to be apprehended from it. Wherefore he places the clause concerning the testimony from those without after the rest. He does not simply say "He must have a good testimony," but he added also, "From those without," to show that previous to the testimony from those without a careful examination of the candidate should be made. Since then I knew your qualities better than your parents, as you admit, it is therefore right that I should be acquitted of all blame.

Basil. For this very reason, said he, you should not be acquitted if anyone wished to accuse you. Do you not remember that you often heard me say, what you must also have known from my conduct, how deficient I am in strength of character? Did you not, many a time, laugh at me for my pusillanimity

* 1 Tim. iii, 7.

and for my want of courage in ordinary difficulties and troubles?

5. Chrysostom. I cannot deny, said I, that I remember having often heard you say so. But if I ever laughed at you, I did it in jest, not in earnest; yet I will not dispute the point with you now, but I ask you to show me the same indulgence while I proceed to mention some of your good qualities. And if you try to prove that what I say is false, I will not spare you, but I will show that you are speaking from a sense of modesty, rather than telling the truth, and I will bring forward no other witness than your own words and deeds to prove the truth of what I state. Do you understand then the value of charity? For Christ passing over all the other miracles which the apostles were to perform, says: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." * Paul declares that it is the fulfilling of the law, † and that if it be wanting the gifts are of no avail. ‡ Now I saw that this excellent virtue, the mark of the disciples of Christ, and greater than the gifts, was deeply implanted in your soul, and gave promise of much fruit.

Basil. That I always paid great attention to that point, and made every effort to fulfil that commandment, I myself admit; but that I have not half fulfilled it you yourself could testify, if you would cease to speak from affection and give your verdict according to truth.

Chrysostom. Well, said I, I shall have recourse to proofs, and as I threatened, I shall proceed to show that you are speaking from a sense of modesty rather than telling the truth. And I will mention a fact of recent occurrence, that no one may imagine that by

* John xiii, 35. † Rom. xiii, 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii, 2.

relating an event long past I am attempting to cloak the truth by the remoteness of the date, as oblivion* would not permit anyone to find fault with what I say as a compliment.

6. For when one of our friends was in great danger in consequence of an accusation of insolence and arrogance, unsolicited by any one, unasked even by him who was in peril, you rushed into the midst of danger. Such was your act. And to convince you by your words I will remind you of what you said. As some did not approve of your conduct, while others praised and admired it, you said to those who blamed you: What was I to do? I know not how to love in any other way than by giving even my life to save any of my friends from danger. In different terms, but in the same sense, you expressed what Christ said to His disciples when He laid down the limits of perfect charity: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." † If there cannot be greater love than this, then you have already reached its perfection. By your acts and by your words you have already reached its summit. It was for this reason I betrayed you; for this reason I contrived that stratagem. Pray, have I convinced you that it was not with evil intent, nor from a desire to cast you into danger, but from the conviction that it would be for your benefit, that I forced you into that position?

Basil. Do you then think that the power of charity is enough for the correction of our neighbour?

Chrysostom. Certainly, said I, it contributes much to that end. But if you wish me to bring forward a proof of your prudence also, I shall

* For λήθης another reading has ἀληθείας. † John xv, 13.

proceed to show that you are as prudent as you are charitable.

Basil. On this he blushed deeply, and said: Let alone for the present what concerns me. At the outset I did not ask you for an explanation on that head. But if you have any valid reply to make to the public, I should like to hear what you have to say. Therefore, leave off fighting with shadows, and tell me what justification you can give to the public, to those who purposed to promote you, and to those who sympathise with them as being insulted.

7. Chrysostom. I, too, said I, am hastening to that point, for as I have concluded my explanation in what regards yourself, I gladly turn to that portion of my defence. What then is their accusation? what are the charges?

They say they have been insulted and badly treated by us, because we did not accept the dignity they wished to confer. In the first place, I maintain that one ought to make no account of insult to men, if by honouring them one is forced to offend God. I do not think that their displeasure is void of danger to themselves, but rather that it is very hurtful to them. For in my opinion those who serve God, and look to Him alone, should be so piously disposed as not to consider it an insult should they be so treated over and over again. That I never even thought of daring to act so can be shown as follows: Had I taken sides with my accusers, and through pride and vanity treated with contempt those excellent and eminent men, who are moreover benefactors, as you say I am often accused of doing, I should be guilty of the greatest injustice. For if to injure those who have done one no wrong merits punishment, in what honour ought they to be held who of their own accord

chose to confer honour upon me? For no man can say that they received benefits either great or small from me and are now requiting them. What punishment should I not deserve if I made them a bad return? Now if I never thought of insulting them, but declined the heavy burden for another reason, why, if they cannot approve of my action, do they refuse to pardon me, and accuse me because I have spared their souls? For my part, so far was I from insulting those men, that I venture to assert I have done them honour by declining. And do not be surprised at what I say, as if it were a paradox, for I will explain my meaning presently.

8. For had I accepted ordination, it would have been possible, if not for all, at least for those who love to find fault, to entertain many suspicions about me and about the electors, and to say, for instance, that they look to wealth and admire distinction of birth, that they promoted me because I flattered them; and I am not sure whether it would not have been suspected that they were bribed by me. Or it would have been said: Christ made choice of fishermen, of tent-makers, of publicans for this office, but these electors despise such as live by their daily toil; but if anyone has a smattering of profane learning and lives an idle life, they select and look up to him. Why did they pass over many who had undergone innumerable labours in the service of the Church, and straightway thrust into such a dignity a man who never had the least experience of such toils, but had spent his whole life in vain and worldly learning? People might have said this and much more had I accepted the office; but now they cannot, for every pretext for accusation has been taken away, and they cannot accuse me of flattery, nor the electors of venality, unless they have quite lost their senses. Is it credible

that a person who had recourse to flattery and bribery to obtain a dignity, would leave it to others when the time came for him to receive it? This would be to act like a man who should spend much toil on his land in order to reap an abundant harvest, and that his wine-presses might overflow with wine, and when the time of the harvest and the vintage arrived should after all his toil and expense leave the gathering in of the fruits to others. Do you then perceive that even though what might have been said was far from true, yet persons desirous of fault-finding would have had a pretext for saying that the electors made their choice without discretion. But I have rendered it impossible for them to say a word, or even so much as to open their mouth. This and much more would have been said at first. But after I had entered on the office I should never have been able to refute their accusations, though I discharged every duty faultlessly; and much less, since I must have made many mistakes through inexperience and youth. By acting as I have done, I have delivered the electors from such censure, whereas by acting otherwise I should have exposed them to endless reproaches. For what would people not have said? "They have confided things so sacred and so great to senseless boys. They have ruined the flock of God. The interests of Christians have become a toy and a laughing stock." "But now all iniquity shall stop her mouth." * But if they speak of you in this way, you will soon show them by your works that one must not judge of wisdom by age, nor value an old man for his hoary hair, nor reject a young man from so great a ministry, but only a neophyte. And between the two there is a wide difference

* Ps. cvii, 42.

BOOK III

1. Those who suspect that I declined through pride have injured their own reputation.
2. I did not fly through vanity.
3. Had I desired vainglory I should rather have accepted the office.
4. The priesthood is august, and the priesthood of the new law more august than that of the old.
5. The greatness of the power and dignity of priests.
6. They are the ministers of God's greatest gifts.
7. Paul was awe-struck when he considered the priesthood.
8. One who undertakes a public office is exposed to many faults unless he be very generous.
9. He is overcome by vainglory and its evil consequences.
10. It is not the priesthood that is to blame for this, but our own negligence.
11. Ambition should be banished from the mind of a priest.
*12. A priest should be most wise.
13. Other qualities besides mortification are requisite in a priest.
14. Nothing darkens the mind so much as anger.
15. Another dangerous enemy.
16. What manner of man a priest exposed to such dangers ought to be.
17. What a source of anxiety is the government of virgins.

1. I HAVE already shown that it was not to insult those who elected me to honours, nor to put them to shame, that I declined this dignity; and I now proceed to show to the best of my ability that it was not from a spirit of pride. If a military command or a throne had been proposed to my choice, and I had acted in that event as I have now done, such a suspicion might have been entertained, and even then no one

* The titles, 12 to 17, are wanting in the Greek Summary. They are here supplied from the Latin. *Apud Migne.*

would have accused me of pride, though all would have adjudged me guilty of folly. But when there is question of the priesthood, which as far excels royal dignity as the soul excels the body, will any one be so bold as to accuse me of arrogance? Is it not absurd to accuse of folly those who despise what is unimportant, and at the same time to exonerate from the charge of folly and load with that of pride those who decline what is far more important? It is just as absurd as it would be to accuse a man, not of pride but of folly, for despising a good herd of cattle and refusing to become a herdsman, and at the same time to declare that a man who should decline the empire of the whole world and the command of all its armies was not a fool, but proud. But such is not the fact. Those who speak thus accuse not me but themselves. For to imagine that it is in human nature to despise such a dignity is a sufficient proof of the estimate in which it is held by those who make the charge. If they did not regard it as something commonplace and of no great importance, such a suspicion would never have occurred to them. Why does no one venture to entertain such a suspicion about the angelic nature, and say that the soul of man would not choose through pride to ascend to the dignity of the angels? The reason is we entertain a high idea of those Powers, and this does not permit us to believe that man could aspire to a greater honour than that. Hence those who make that accusation might be more justly accused of pride, for they would never have entertained such a suspicion about another, did they not already look on the office as of little importance. And if they maintain that I have acted from a motive of vain-glory, they are trifling and evidently contradicting themselves, for I know not what other arguments

they could bring forward if they desired to defend me from the charge of vainglory.

2. Had I been influenced by such a motive I should have accepted rather than have declined the office. Why? Because that would have brought me great glory. That a man so young, who had but recently abandoned worldly pursuits, should be so highly esteemed by all as to be preferred to men who had spent their whole life in the service of the Church, and should receive more votes than all of them, would have led the people to entertain a high opinion of me, and have rendered me an object of veneration and respect. But now, with but few exceptions, the majority of the faithful do not know me even by name. Hence the fact that I have declined is not known to all, but only to a few; and I suppose that even these do not all know the truth. Probably most of them are of opinion that I was not decidedly elected, or that after the election I was considered unqualified and rejected, and not that I declined of my own accord.

3. Basil. But those who know the truth will wonder.

Chrysostom. But you said that these very persons accuse me of pride and vainglory. Whence is glory to be expected? From the many? But they do not know what has taken place. Is it from the few? But here you completely change your argument. For you came for no other purpose than to inquire what explanation could be made to them. And why should I be so precise on their account? Wait a moment, and you will be convinced that even had all known the truth they ought not even then to have judged me guilty of pride and vainglory. Moreover you will understand that not only those who have the temerity to despise the priesthood—if any one has, which I hardly believe—but even those who suspect

the like about another are exposed to no small danger.

4. For the office indeed of the priesthood is executed upon earth, but it ranks amongst things that are heavenly, and with good reason. For it was neither a man nor an angel nor an archangel nor any other created power, but the Paraclete Himself that established that ministry, and commanded that men yet abiding in the flesh should imitate the functions of angels. Wherefore it behoves the priest to be as pure as if he stood in heaven itself amidst those Powers. The things, indeed, which preceded the law of grace were fearful and awe-inspiring: the bells, the pomegranates, the precious stones on the breast and on the shoulders, the mitre, the diadem, the garment reaching down to the feet, the plate of gold, the Holy of Holies and the solemn stillness within.* But if you examine the things of the law of grace, you will find that those awful and awe-inspiring things are small in comparison, and that what was said of the law is true also here. "For that which was glorious in this part was not glorified by reason of the glory that excelleth." † For when you behold the Lord immolated and lying on the altar, and the priest standing over the sacrifice and praying, and all the people purpled by that precious blood, do you imagine that you are still on earth amongst men, and not rather rapt up to heaven; and casting away all worldly thoughts from your mind, do you not contemplate with a clean heart and pure mind the things of heaven? O miracle! O goodness of God! He that sitteth above with the Father, is at that moment in the hands ‡ of all, and gives Him-

* Exod. xxviii. † 2 Cor. iii, 10.

‡ There is an allusion here to the ancient mode of distributing Holy Communion. The sacred particle was placed in the hand of the communicant.

self to all who desire to embrace and receive Him, and all do so with the eyes of faith. Do these things seem to you deserving of contempt, or of such a nature as that any one could despise them? Do you desire to learn from another miracle the excellence of that sacred office? Picture to yourself Elias, and the immense multitude standing around, and the victim laid on the altar, and all in stillness and in deep silence, while the prophet alone prays; and the fire forthwith descends from heaven upon the victim. * All this is wonderful and awe-inspiring. Then pass from thence to the sacrifice which is now offered, and you will behold what is not only wonderful, but what exceeds all admiration. For the priest stands bringing down not fire, but the Holy Ghost, and he prays long not that fire may descend from heaven and consume the oblation, but that grace may descend upon the sacrifice, and through it inflame the souls of all and render them brighter than silver fire-tried. Who then, unless he has completely lost his reason and senses, could despise this most awful ministry? Know ye not that the soul of man could never have endured that fire of the sacrifice, but all would have utterly perished were it not for the abundant assistance of the grace of God?

5. For if you consider what it is for a man yet clothed in flesh and blood to be able to approach that pure and blessed nature, you will easily understand to what a dignity the grace of the Holy Ghost has raised priests. For by them these things are accomplished, and others not inferior to these pertaining to our dignity and salvation. For men who have their abode and sojourn upon earth have

* 3 Kings xviii.

been entrusted with a heavenly ministry and have received a power which God has not granted to angels or archangels. For it was not said to them, "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed." * Rulers on earth have the power of binding, but they can bind the body only.† But this bond

* Matt. xviii, 18.

† In a sermon preached at Antioch St. Chrysostom contrasts the dignity of priests with that of kings, and seems to promise a treatise on the Priesthood. "The priesthood, indeed, is a dignity greater and more venerable than that of a king. Speak not to me of purple, nor of diadem, nor of garments decked with gold; all these things are but shadows, more fleeting than the flowers of spring. For all the glory of man, even that of a king, is as the flowers of the field. Speak not to me of these. But if you desire to see how great is the difference between a king and a priest, consider the measure of the power which is granted to each, and you will see the priest placed far above a king. Though the royal throne is an object of admiration on account of the gems which adorn it, and the gold with which it is encircled, yet to the king belongs only the administration of earthly things, nor beyond those has he any power. But the throne of priests is set in heaven, and they have power to determine heavenly things. Who has said this? The King of heaven Himself. 'Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven' (Matt. xviii, 18). What honour can be compared to this? Heaven receives from earth the princely power of judging. For the judge sits on earth, the Lord followeth the servant, and whatsoever the latter decides here below the former confirms above. Therefore the priest stands as intermediary between God and man; bringing down to us the blessings that come from above, and bearing our prayers on high, appeasing the wrath of God against man, and rescuing us who have offended from His hands. Hence God has made the person of the king subject to the hand of the priest, teaching us that the dignity of the latter is greater than that of the former. In sooth, that which is less receives a blessing from that which is greater. But of the priesthood and of the greatness of its dignity I will treat at another time."—*Sermon* 5, "*On the words of Isaias: In the year that King Ozias died*" (Isa. vi, 1). *Migne P.G.* vol. 56, col. 130.

reaches to the soul itself, and transcends the heavens; and what priests do upon earth God ratifies above, and the master confirms the sentence of his servants. What then has He given but all power in heaven? "Whose sins," He says, "you forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain they are retained." * What power could be greater than this? "The Father hath given all power to the Son." † Now I see that all this power has been placed in their hands by the Son, and they are raised to such a dignity as though they were already lifted up to heaven, elevated above human nature, and set free from its passions.

If a king were to bestow upon any of his subjects the power of casting into prison, and of liberating whom he pleased, such a man would be envied and reverenced by all. And when a man receives from God a power so much greater than that, as heaven is above earth and the soul above the body, are there some who think the dignity so inconsiderable as to imagine it possible for one to whom such things have been confided to despise the gift? Out upon such folly! For it is manifest folly to despise so great a ministry without which we can neither obtain salvation nor the good things that have been promised. For as no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, unless he be born again of water and the Holy Ghost; ‡ and as he shall be excluded from everlasting life except he eats the flesh of the Lord, and drinks His blood; § and as all these things are ministered only by the consecrated hands of priests, how shall anyone without their assistance either escape the fire of hell or obtain the crown that is prepared?

* John xx, 23. † John v, 23. ‡ John iii, 5 § John vi, 54.

6. It is to priests that spiritual birth and regeneration by baptism is entrusted. By them we put on Christ, and are united to the Son of God, and become members of that blessed head. Hence we should regard them as more august than princes and kings, and more venerable than parents. For the latter begot us of blood and the will of the flesh, but priests are the cause of our generation from God, of our spiritual regeneration, of our true freedom and sonship according to grace.

The priests of the Jews had power to cleanse from leprosy, or rather not cleanse, but to declare cleansed.* Yet you know what emulation there was then to obtain the sacerdotal office. But our priests have received power not to declare cleansed, but to cleanse in reality, not the leprosy of the body, but the uncleanness of the soul. Hence those who should despise such an office, would be more abominable than Dathan and his fellows, † and deserving of severer punishment. For though they laid claim to a dignity which did not belong to them, yet by their desire to obtain it they showed that they held it in high esteem. But those who despise the priesthood after it has been so much honoured and ennobled, display a temerity far greater, but in an opposite sense. For, to aspire to a dignity that does not belong to one and to despise so great an office, is by no means an equal act of contempt; but the latter is so much more grievous than the former, as contempt is worse than admiration. Who can be so miserable as to despise so great a good? No one, I venture to say, unless he is urged on by the instigation of the devil.

* Lev. xiv, 3. † Numb. xvi.

But to return to the point from which I have digressed. God has given to priests a power greater than that of our parents according to nature, not merely to chastise, but also to benefit; and so much greater as the future life excels the present. For our parents begot us to the present life, but priests to the life to come; and the former cannot ward off from their children the death of the body, nor hinder disease from attacking them; whereas the latter often preserve souls that are ill and about to die, by imposing a light penance on some, and by hindering others from falling, and that not merely by instruction and admonition, but also by the help of prayer. And not only in our regeneration have they the power to remit sin; but they have also the power to remit the sins committed after regeneration. For the Apostle says: "Is any man sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in his sins, they shall be forgiven him." * Moreover, parents according to nature can be of no assistance to their children if they chance to offend anyone in dignity and power. But priests have often reconciled them, not with kings or princes, but with God himself when incensed against them. After this will anyone dare to charge me with arrogance? For I am of opinion that all who have heard what I have said, are so impressed with a sense of piety that they will charge with arrogance and rashness, not such as fly, but such as put themselves forward, and are eager to obtain this dignity. For if those who are entrusted

* S. James v, 14, 15.

with the government of states overturn the commonwealth and bring ruin on themselves if they are not intelligent and prudent, what power, both natural and supernatural, does not he whose office it is to adorn the bride of Christ require in order not to fail?

7. No man loved Christ more than Paul did, no one evinced greater zeal, no one was endowed with greater grace; yet after all that he was filled with fear and trembling, both on account of the office and on account of the faithful. "But I fear," he says, "lest, as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"; * and again, "I was with you in fear and much trembling." † Yet he was a man who had been rapt up to the third heaven, ‡ who had been made partaker of the secrets of God, who had endured as many deaths as he had lived days after his conversion to the faith, and who would not use the power given him by Christ, lest any of the faithful should be scandalized. If then he who did more than was commanded by God, who did not seek the things that were his own but the interests of the faithful, who was ever filled with fear when he looked to the greatness of his office, what should be our feelings, who often seek our own interests, and who not only do not go beyond the commandments of Christ, but to a large extent transgress them? "Who is weak," says he, "and I am not weak; who is scandalized, and I am not on fire." § Such ought a priest to be, or rather, not merely such, for that is little in comparison with what I am about to say. What is that? "I wished," says he, "to be anathema from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen

* 2 Cor. xi, 3.
† 1 Cor. ii, 3.
‡ 2 Cor. xii, 2.
§ 2 Cor. xi, 29.

according to the flesh." * If any man can give utterance to such expressions, if any man is possessed of a soul capable of offering such a prayer, he may be justly blamed if he flies. But if anyone is so deficient in that excellence as I am, he deserves to be detested, not when he flies, but when he accepts the office. If there were question of some military office, and the electors brought forward a smith, or a shoemaker or any other artizan, and gave him command of the army, I would not praise the wretched man unless he took to flight, and did all in his power not to cast himself into manifest danger. If it is enough to bear the name of pastor, and to receive the office, no matter how, and if there is no danger therein, any man may accuse me of vainglory. But if great prudence—and even more than prudence—great grace from God, good morals, purity of life, and more than ordinary virtue are required in him who undertakes that office, do not refuse to pardon me because I was unwilling rashly and uselessly to rush to destruction. For if anyone should place me at the helm of a vessel, manned with sailors and laden with all manner of merchandise, and bid me steer across the Ægean or Tuscan Sea, I should resist at once, and were I asked the reason, I should say that I did not wish to sink the ship.

Is it then a fact that no one finds fault with a man for taking great precaution where there is no loss to be apprehended but that of money, and no danger but that of corporal death; and on the other hand, where the mariners are exposed, not to be cast into the waters of the sea, but into an abyss of fire, and where death, not such as separates the soul from the

* Rom. ix, 3.

body, but which after that consigns the soul to everlasting punishment awaits them, will you be angry and displeased with me for not having rushed headlong into such a calamity?

8. Let it not be so, I beg and beseech you. I know how weak and pusillanimous my soul is; I know too the dignity and difficulty of that ministry. The billows which assail the soul of a priest are greater than those which tempests raise upon the ocean.

9. First of all there is that most dangerous rock of vainglory, far more dreadful than that of the Sirens * described in fable by the poets. For many succeeded in passing that rock and escaping unharmed, but to me this one is so dangerous that even now, when no necessity forces me to that whirlpool, I am unable to keep clear of the danger. Now if one were to impose this dignity upon me, he would as it were deliver me up with my hands bound behind my back to be torn to pieces day by day by the beasts that dwell on that rock. What are those beasts? Anger, sadness, envy, contention, detraction, accusation, falsehood, hypocrisy, snares, imprecations on those who have done no wrong, satisfaction at the disgrace of fellow-labourers in the ministry, sorrow at their success, love of praise, ambition of honours (a passion which most of all leads the soul to destruction), preaching to please, servile adulation, ignoble flattery, contempt of the poor, servility towards the rich, unreasonable marks of respect, blameworthy tokens of gratitude, as dangerous to those who give as to those who receive them, servile fear befitting only the meanest slaves the absence of liberty of speech, the appearance of humility without

* Odys xii, 167.

the reality, a want of courage to rebuke and admonish, or rather unmeasured severity towards the poor, while hardly daring to open one's lips towards those in power. All these monsters, and many more, dwell on that rock, and whosoever is seized on by them is necessarily reduced to such a state of servitude as often to do what it is unbecoming even to mention in order to please women. For the divine law has excluded women from this ministry, and they strive to force their way into it, and as of themselves they cannot succeed, they accomplish everything by means of others, and they have acquired such influence that they choose and depose priests as they please. And by a reversal of order the words of the proverb are verified, "Subjects govern their rulers," * and would that it were men that did so, and not those who are not permitted even to teach. Teach, do I say? The blessed Paul does not permit them even to speak in the Church. † I have heard it said that they have assumed such licence as to censure and rebuke bishops of the Church more severely than masters do their slaves.

10. But do not imagine that I regard all priests as subject to the aforesaid faults. There are in fact many who have escaped these snares, and more even than have been caught in them. Nor do I lay the blame of these evils on the priestly office. I am not so foolish. For steel is not the cause of murder, nor wine of drunkenness, nor strength of insolence, nor valour of rashness; but all right-thinking men hold those who do not make a good use of the gifts of God accountable, and punish them. The priesthood, indeed, might justly blame us if we do not treat

* Eccles. x, 7. † 1 Tim. ii, 12.

it rightly, for it is not the cause of the evils I have mentioned; but we ourselves, as far as in us lies, defile it by bestowing it upon all kinds of persons. These, again, not knowing their own souls, nor considering the importance of the office, eagerly accept it when offered; but when they come to practice, their inexperience blinds them, and they inflict innumerable evils on the people committed to their care. And assuredly this is what had almost happened to me, had not God, in mercy to His Church and to my own soul, delivered me from the danger. Tell me, pray, whence do so many disturbances arise in the Church? They arise, in my opinion, from no other cause than from the imprudent and negligent manner in which the choice and election of bishops is made.

For when the head, which must be very steady to dissipate and rectify the vapours ascending from the body, is itself weak, being unable to dissipate those morbid vapours, it becomes weaker than before, and with itself it brings the whole body to ruin. That this might not happen in my case, God has kept me in the position of the feet which I had occupied from the beginning.

For there are many qualifications, dear Basil, besides those already mentioned, which a priest ought to have, and which I do not possess. Above all there is this one. His mind should be entirely free from ambition for the office. For if he aspires to the dignity, on obtaining it his passion becomes more inflamed, and completely overpowers him; so that to retain his office he submits to innumerable hardships even so far as to have recourse to flattery, and to endure mean and unseemly treatment, and to lay out large sums of money. And not to seem to go beyond the

limits of credibility, I say nothing for the present of the fact that many, by their contests for that dignity, have filled churches with slaughter and completely disturbed the peace of cities. Now in my opinion a man ought to be filled with such sentiments of piety regarding that office, as to fly from the dignity at the commencement; and after he has obtained it, he should not await the sentence of others if he falls into a fault deserving deposition; but he should himself take the initiative and resign the dignity. In this way he may reasonably expect to draw down on himself the mercy of God. Whereas by unbecomingly clinging to the dignity, a man renders himself undeserving of any indulgence, and enkindles still more the anger of God by adding a second fault worse than the first.

11. But no one will ever endure this. It is in truth a very terrible thing to covet that dignity. And in saying this I do not contradict the blessed Paul, but I am in complete agreement with him. What does he say? "If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." * And I have said that it is a terrible thing to desire, not the work, but the authority and the power.

Such ambition ought to be banished with all care from the mind, and ought not to be permitted to hold sway over it, even from the commencement, in order to preserve liberty of action.

For a man who does not desire to be conspicuous in that dignity is not afraid of being deprived of it, and not being afraid he can fulfil his duty with such liberty as becomes a Christian. On the contrary, those who fear and tremble to be deprived of the

* 1 Tim. iii, 1.

office, endure a slavery bitter and full of hardships, and are oftentimes driven to offend both God and men. Such ought not to be our sentiments; but as in war brave soldiers fight courageously and fall manfully, so it is fitting that those, who undertake this ministry, should hold the priesthood or accept deposition from the office as becomes Christian men, who know that such a deposition merits no less a reward than the possession of the dignity. For when a man suffers such treatment because he would not submit to anything unbecoming and unworthy of his dignity, he draws down chastisement on those who depose him unjustly and merits for himself a greater reward. For "Blessed are ye," says He, "when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for My sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." * And this is true, when a man is removed from his office by his fellow ministers, either through envy, or to gratify others, or through enmity, or any unjust motive. But when it falls to his lot to endure such treatment from his enemies, no proof, I imagine, is needed to show what a reward their malice prepares for him. One should therefore examine carefully to see whether any spark of that ambition smoulders unknown to him. And it were much to be desired that those who, in the beginning, were free from that passion should succeed in keeping free from it when they attain the dignity; for if any man before his promotion nourishes that fierce and cruel monster within him, no tongue can tell into what a furnace he casts himself when he has attained it. As for me (and do not imagine that from a feeling of

* Matt. v, 11, 12.

modesty I desire to say what is untrue), I admit I had a great desire of that dignity ; and this, in addition to all the other reasons, was not the least powerful motive to inspire me with fear and make me take to flight. For as in the case of lovers, so long as they are near the persons whom they love their passion increases in vehemence, but when they withdraw as far as possible from the object of their passion, they overcome their infatuation, so it is with those who aspire to that dignity, when they are within reach of it their passion becomes ungovernable, but when they are disappointed in their hopes, they get rid of their ambition along with their expectations.

12. This motive, of itself, is of no small weight, and had it been the only one, it would have sufficed to deter me from accepting that dignity. But there is another reason no less weighty. What is it ? It behoveth a bishop to be sober, circumspect and extremely vigilant, since he lives not for himself alone, but for the people. Now though in your affection for me you are most eager to hide my faults, you must admit that I am sluggish and without energy and hardly fit to attend to my own salvation. And in this connexion do not speak to me of fasting, watching, or sleeping on the bare ground, or other bodily austerities, for you know how deficient I am in such things, and even if I practised them most exactly, they would not, considering my present sluggishness, be enough to help me in that office. To a man who is shut up in a sort of cell, and who attends only to himself, such practices are of great advantage. But to one who is, so to say, split up amongst so great a multitude, and who is charged with the cares of each of his subjects, of what real advantage are

such observances to enable him to fulfil his duties faithfully, unless he possesses a strong and most vigorous soul?

13. And do not be surprised that along with such austerity I require another test of vigour of soul. For, to despise food and drink and a soft bed is, as we know, a matter of no great difficulty to many, especially to such as are of a rougher nature, or have been so brought up from their youth; and in the case of others natural temperament and habit softens the asperity of such things. But there are not many, or rather hardly one or two, who can put up with contumely, insult, vulgar language, taunts deliberate or indeliberate from inferiors, and complaints heedlessly and unreasonably made by inferiors or superiors. There are to be seen men capable of bearing the austerities above mentioned, who lose their heads under those insults to such a degree that they act frantically like the fiercest wild beasts. Such as these should be repelled far from the precincts of the priesthood. The fact that a bishop does not practice great abstinence or go bare-foot, does no injury to the general interests of the Church, but violent anger does great harm to him who is subject to it, as well as to those who approach him. No threat has been uttered by God against those who do not practise those austerities, but hell, and the fire of hell, is threatened against those who are angry without cause.* For as a man who is prone to vainglory adds fuel to the fire when he undertakes to govern the people, so a man who cannot restrain his anger in private conversation, but bursts out easily into a passion, if charged with the government of others, like a wild beast pricked by innumer-

* Matt. v, 22.

able darts, he can never be at peace himself, and he inflicts much suffering on his subjects.

14. For nothing so clouds clearness and penetration of mind as inordinate and violent anger. "For anger," saith He, "ruins even the prudent." * For, the eye of the soul being darkened, as in a battle by night, the angry man cannot distinguish friend from foe, noble from ignoble, but treats all alike and willingly bears any hardship whatsoever in order to gratify his passion. For the passion of anger is a kind of gratification, and it exercises a greater tyranny over the mind than any pleasure, and destroys its healthful calmness. For it urges on to arrogance and unseasonable enmities, and unreasonable hatred, and often prepares the way for rash and foolish conflicts, and drives men to say and do many such things, while the soul is dragged down by the force of passion, and can find no support to enable it to resist such violence.

Basil. I will no longer suffer you to go on speaking ironically. For who does not know how free you are from that passion?

Chrysostom. Why then, said I, my dear friend, do you wish to bring me near the fire, or to rouse the sleeping monster? Do you not know that I have succeeded, not by my own virtue, but by loving a life of retirement; and that a person with a character like mine can easily escape the conflagration, provided he lives apart or with one or two friends; but that quite the contrary happens if he falls into such a sea of troubles. And then it is not himself alone, but a multitude of others that he drags with him to the brink of destruction, and renders them less careful

* Prov. xvi.

about the practice of moderation. For people are wont to look to the conduct of their superiors as a model, and to form themselves after their example. How then could one allay the heat of their passions if he is himself inflamed? What subject would be willing to practice self-control if he sees his prelate prone to anger? For it is impossible to conceal the faults of priests: even their smallest faults soon become manifest. As long as an athlete remains at home, however weak he may be, he can conceal what he is, but as soon as he strips for the contest, what he is becomes manifest. So it is with men who lead a private and quiet life. The solitude hides their faults, but when they take part in public affairs, they are compelled to cast off the cloak of solitude, and in the excitement of the world to lay bare their souls to all. Hence as their good deeds are profitable to many, and excite them to emulation, so too their faults make others more negligent in the practice of virtue, and render them indolent in the labour of doing good. Therefore, the beauty of a priest's soul should be, in all respects, so resplendent as to gladden and enlighten the souls of all who see him. For the sins of ordinary people, committed as it were in secret injure only those who commit them, but the sins of one who holds a position of eminence and is known to many are detrimental to all, for they render the fallen more remiss in striving to do good, and they excite the diligent to pride. Moreover, the faults of ordinary persons, even though public, do no great injury. But those who occupy the pinnacle of this dignity are conspicuous to all, and besides, even though the things in which they fail be small, the small things seem great to others. For all measure the gravity of a sin, not by the gravity of the act, but

by the dignity of him who commits it. A priest, therefore, should put on, as it were, armour of adamant, by means of constant care and unceasing vigilance over himself, watching on every side that no one may be able to discover an unprotected or neglected part, and inflict on him a deadly wound. For all surround him ready to strike and cast him down. And this is true not only of his private and public enemies, but even of those who pretend to be his friends. Men ought to be elected whose souls are such as grace rendered the bodies of the ancient saints in the furnace of Babylon. For the fuel of this fire is not wood, pitch, tow, but far worse than these; for it is not palpable fire that is in question, but the devouring flame of envy surrounds the priest spreading on all sides, enveloping him and testing his life more severely than the fire of old tried the bodies of those young men. When it finds the smallest trace of stubble it immediately seizes on it and consumes what is unsound, and begrimes with smoke and blackens the rest of the building, were it more beautiful than the rays of the sun. As long as the life of a priest is in all respects well ordered he is proof against such attacks. But if he be negligent in the smallest thing, as may easily happen, since he is but a man, and voyages on the tempestuous sea of this life, his past good works are powerless to protect him from the tongues of accusers, and that one small fault casts a shadow on all the rest of his actions, for all wish to judge of a priest, not as of a man clothed with flesh and subject to human infirmity, but as of an angel exempt from every weakness. And, as in the case of a tyrant, all men fear and flatter him as long as he is powerful, but as soon as they see his fortune beginning to fail they put off their pretended respect, and those who a little

before were his friends immediately become his enemies, and as they know his weak points they attack him and overthrow his power, so it is with priests. Those who a little before honoured and revered him while he was powerful, should they get the least opportunity make an effort to depose him as a tyrant, and worse than a tyrant. And just as the tyrant fears his body-guard, so the bishop fears most of all his associates and fellow-labourers. For, as in the case of the former, none so ardently aspire to his dignity or know him so well, so too in the case of the latter. As they are about him, should he fall into any fault they are the first to perceive it. They are readily believed even when they calumniate him, and by exaggerating small faults they can easily convict him on grounds which are false. For the saying of the apostle is reversed: "And if one member suffer anything all the members rejoice, or if one member glory all the members suffer." * Would you send me forth to engage in such a warfare? Do you consider I have sufficient courage to face a conflict so varied and manifold? Whence or from whom have you ascertained that I have? For if God has made it known to you, state His response, and I will submit! But if you cannot, and are giving your vote according to public opinion, disabuse yourself of your error. For in what concerns myself I should be believed in preference to all others, for "No man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man which is in him." † Now that I should have rendered myself and my electors ridiculous, and should have returned with great

* The text is, "And if one member suffer anything all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. xii, 26).

† 1 Cor. ii, 11.

loss to my present state of life, I think you must be convinced at least by what I have just stated, if you were not persuaded of it before. For not only envy, but ambition (a passion more violent than envy) is wont to arm many against him who holds this office. And as sons who are ambitious * are impatient of the long life of their father, so it is with some of those of whom we speak. When they see a man a long time a bishop, as it is a crime to kill him, they endeavour to remove him from his office, for they all desire to occupy his place, and each expects that the dignity will devolve on himself.

15. Do you wish that I should set before you another specimen of this warfare, full of innumerable dangers? Go and witness the solemn festivals, when, according to usage, ecclesiastical elections are generally held, and you will see the priest assailed by as many accusations as he has subjects. For all who have a right to vote for the office are split up into many parties, and you would hardly ever find the assembly of priests agreed amongst themselves or with the presiding bishop; but taking each his own view, one votes for one candidate, and another for a different one. The reason is that all do not pay attention to the very point they should look to, that is, to virtue, but they assign various motives for conferring the office. One says: Let us elect this candidate, for he is of noble family; or this one, because he is wealthy and does not require the revenues of the Church for his support; or that other, because he comes to us from the ranks of our adversaries. One votes for an acquaintance, another for a relative, a third tries to get one of his flatterers preferred to all

* Another reading is, "Sons who covet riches."

others. But no one wishes to consider who is fit for the office nor to examine his qualifications.

Now, I am so far from thinking such reasons as these to be valid proofs of fitness for the priesthood, that even if a man had great piety (a qualification of no small advantage for the fulfilment of that office), yet I should not wish to elect him for that reason, unless along with piety he possessed great prudence. For I have known many who practised constant self-denial and emaciated themselves by fasting, and were pleasing to God, and made great progress in perfection every day, as long as they were able to live retired and attend to themselves only; but when they were advanced to a public office, and were obliged to correct the faults of the people, some of them from the outset were unequal to the task, and others, being obliged to remain in office, abandoned their former practices, and incurred great loss themselves, and were of no real advantage to others. And even if a man had spent his whole life in the lower ranks of the clergy, and had reached an advanced age, I would not for all that, through respect for his years, promote him to this high dignity. What if after a long life he should be still wanting in fitness? Nor do I say this to cast a slur on old age, nor to make it a law that monks should be entirely excluded from this office. For there are instances of many from their ranks who have been distinguished in this dignity. What I desire to prove is this: If piety alone, if age is not sufficient to qualify a man to fulfil the office of the priesthood worthily, the pretexts above-mentioned would hardly make him worthy. Some add reasons still more strange. For instance, some are elected that they may not go over to the enemy; others on account of their malice, that they may not, if passed over,

cause greater evils. Can anything be imagined more unlawful than that wicked men, replete with innumerable faults, should be promoted for the very reason for which they deserve to be punished, and should be allowed to ascend to the dignity of the priesthood for the very reason for which they ought not to be permitted to cross the threshold of the Church? And shall we then, I ask, seek how to account for the anger of God towards us, while we deliver up to some who are wicked and to others who are incapable, things so sacred and awe-inspiring to be treated with indignity? For when the wicked are charged with the administration of what befits them not, and the incapable with what is far beyond their capacity, they render the Church no better than a Euripus.* Formerly I used to laugh at secular rulers, because they promote men to honours, not for their virtue but for their wealth or their age, or on account of patronage; but when I discovered that such folly had made its way into our own affairs I no longer considered their conduct strange. For what wonder is it that men of the world, who seek after glory and wealth, should commit such a fault, since those who make profession of being free from such attachments act no better, and when heavenly things are at stake, just as if there were question of portions of land or the like, they make choice of ordinary men, and set them over things for sake of which the only-begotten Son of God did not hesitate to divest Himself of His glory † to become man, to take the form of a slave, to be spit upon, to be buffeted, ‡ and in the flesh to die a most ignominious death.

* A strait between Eubœa and Bœotia, where the tide was very violent.

† Phil. ii, 7 ‡ Matt. xxvi, 67.

Nor do they stop here, but they add what is still more absurd. Not only do they elect the unworthy, but they depose the worthy. As though it behoved them to injure the Church in both ways, and as if the first fault was not enough to enkindle the wrath of God, they have added a second no less pernicious. For I consider it equally bad to depose the good and to intrude the worthless. And this is done, that Christ's flock may nowhere be able to find consolation or rest. Does not this deserve many chastisements? does it not merit a more severe hell than that with which we are threatened? But He who wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live,* suffers and bears all this. How can we sufficiently admire His clemency, and be astonished at His mercy? They that are Christ's injure the things of Christ worse than adversaries and foes; but in His goodness He acts mercifully, and invites to repentance. Glory be to Thee, O Lord! Glory be to Thee! How great is the abyss of Thy mercy! How great the abundance of Thy patience! Men who, from being ignoble and obscure, have through Thy name become distinguished and revered, make use of their dignity against Him who conferred it, and do what none should dare; they treat holy things with contempt, and reject and depose the virtuous in order that the wicked may have full liberty to overturn everything with complete impunity according to their pleasure.

And if you inquire into the causes of this evil, you will find them similar to those above mentioned. For they have one root, and, if I may use the expression, one mother, envy; but their form is various. Let

* Ezech. xviii. 23.

this man, they say, be rejected, because he is young; a second because he is not a flatterer; a third, because he has given offence to such a one; a fourth, that a certain person may not be pained at seeing him elected and his own candidate passed over; a fifth, because he is kind and meek; a sixth, because he is severe in dealing with sinners; a seventh, for some other reason, for they are never at a loss for pretexts. And, if they can find nothing else, they make abundance of wealth a motive for blame; or again they say that no man should be hastily advanced to that dignity, but slowly and by degrees; and they can invent as many other pretexts as they please. Now in such a case, I should like to ask, what is a bishop to do to battle against such storms? How is he to hold his ground against such commotions? How will he refute all these allegations? For if he settles the matter on just principles, he makes them all enemies to himself and to those of whom he makes choice, and they act in all things in a spirit of contention against him; they stir up seditions every day, and scoff incessantly at those who have been elected, until they either oust them, or intrude their own candidates; and the state of affairs becomes similar to that of a captain who has pirates on board continually employed in plotting every moment against himself, against the sailors and the passengers. Now if the bishop prefers their favour to his own salvation, and admits candidates whom he ought to reject, he will have God for his enemy instead of them, and what can be worse than that? Moreover, his relations with them will be more difficult than before, as they all act together, and are made stronger by concord. Just as when violent winds sweep across the calm sea, at once it rages and rolls and wrecks those who sail upon it, so

if corrupt men be admitted into the Church, its calm is exchanged for storms and shipwrecks.

16. Consider then what manner of man he ought to be whose duty it is to bear up against so great a tempest and surmount so many obstacles to the common good. He ought to be grave yet not haughty, awe-inspiring yet kind, full of authority yet affable, no acceptor of persons yet condescending, humble, yet not servile, strong yet meek, that he may be able with ease to cope with all these difficulties, and with full liberty promote the qualified candidate, though all oppose, and with the same liberty not promote the unqualified candidate, even though all combine in his favour; and to look to one thing only, the edification of the Church, and do nothing through hatred or partiality.

Pray do you think I was right in declining so great a ministry? Yet I have not said all. There is much more to be added. And do not weary in bearing with a true friend, who tries to clear himself of the charges you allege against him. What I say will be useful not only for my defence, but will perhaps prove of no small utility to yourself in the fulfilment of your office. For a man who is about to enter on such a course of life should make a full and careful examination before he enters on the work of the ministry. For what reason? For this reason if for no other, that he will not consider such difficulties strange, should they arise, since he is already acquainted with them. Do you wish then that I should proceed to treat first of the government of the widows, or the care of the virgins, or the difficulty of judicial duties? For each of these has its peculiar anxiety and its peculiar responsibility, greater even than the anxiety.

In the first place, then, to begin with what seems easiest, the office of providing for the widows * appears to occasion to those who are charged with it no other concern than what regards the expenditure of money. But such is not the fact. Even in the selection of them a careful investigation has to be made. For the enrolment of them inconsiderately and at random has been the cause of endless trouble. For they have ruined families, and separated husbands and wives, and they have been in many instances caught in thefts and in pandering and in other such unseemly conduct. Now the fact of such persons being supported at the expense of the Church, merits punishment at the hands of God, and severe condemnation from men, and renders the charitable more reluctant to give. For who would wish that the money which he has been enjoined to give to Christ, should be spent on those who bring disgrace on the name of Christ? A careful investigation is therefore necessary to prevent not only such as I have mentioned, but also those who have sufficient means of their own from consuming the support of the indigent. To this investigation succeeds another cause of anxiety by no means inconsiderable, that is to provide abundant and never-failing means for their support. For unwilling poverty is an insatiable evil, querulous and unthankful. And it requires great prudence to stop their mouth and take away every pretext for complaint. There are many who think a man fit for this office when they see that he is not attached to money. But I do not consider such magnanimity enough,

* At Antioch, in St Chrysostom's time, the number of *Viduae* was 3,000. See *Puech.* 'St Chrysostome et les moeurs de son temps,' p. 240.

though it is more important than other qualities; for without it a man would be a spendthrift rather than a steward, and a wolf rather than a shepherd. But along with it another qualification is requisite. Now that quality is patience, a virtue which is the source of all good things to men, and which wafts the soul, as it were, to the pleasant harbour of tranquillity. For by reason of their poverty, their age, and their sex, widows are immoderately free in speech (for that is the best way of putting it). They clamour out of season and complain without cause, and lament where they ought to be thankful, and find fault where they ought to be grateful. And he who is set over them must bear all with courage, and not be moved to anger by their unseasonable brawls and their unreasonable complaints. It is but just to compassionate that class of persons on account of their hard lot, and not to treat them rudely; for to trample on their sufferings and add the pain of insult to that of poverty would be the height of cruelty. Wherefore, considering the avarice and the pride of human nature, and knowing that poverty is capable of prostrating the noblest minds and of leading men oftentimes to lose a sense of self-respect, and desiring that no one when asked for alms should show anger, nor be exasperated by frequent requests, and act like an enemy when it is his duty to give relief, the wise man exhorts in the following terms to show oneself meek end affable to the needy: "Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and answer him cheerful words with mildness." * And omitting mention of the provoker (for what would you have him say to the fallen?) he addresses him who is able to bear with the weak, and admonishes to

* Eccles. iv, 8.

raise him up by serenity of countenance and by kind words even before offering him a gift. Though one does not withhold from them means of support, yet if he loads them with reproaches, if he insults them and is angry with them, he is so far from relieving them by his alms that he increases their sufferings by his reproaches. For though, by want of the necessaries of life, they are driven to be over-bold, yet when treated with such violence they are pained. When, therefore, through fear of hunger, they are forced to beg, and in begging to be saucy, and then have to suffer insult on account of their boldness, their minds become clouded and enveloped in deep gloom and dejection. Now he who is charged with their care should be a man of such longanimity that he will not increase their affliction by his indignation, but rather alleviate it to a great extent by words of consolation. For however abundant be the alms given to a poor man, he does not appreciate it if it be accompanied by insults. On the other hand, he who is addressed in kind and gentle words, receives with consolation what is given him, and rejoices and is glad; and the alms is doubled by the manner of giving it. And it is not on my own authority I say this, but on the authority of him whose exhortation I have quoted above. For he says: "My son, in thy good works make no complaint, and when thou givest anything add not grief by an evil word. Shall not the dew assuage the heat? Lo! the good word is better than the gift; and both are with a justified man." *

He who is charged with this duty should not only be mild and patient, but also a good manager. If he

* Eccles. xviii, 15-16.

is devoid of this quality, the goods of the poor will suffer loss. It has happened that a certain person, being charged with this duty, collected a large quantity of gold, and he neither spent it on himself nor distributed it to the poor, except to a few, but hid the greater part of it in the earth until troubles broke out, and it fell into the hands of the enemy. Great foresight then is needed that the goods of the Church may be neither superabundant nor deficient. What is contributed should be immediately distributed to the poor; and the liberality of the faithful should be looked on as the treasury of the Church.

Again, in hospitality to strangers and in the care of the sick, what an expenditure is necessary, how much attention and prudence on the part of those charged with that duty! The outlay necessary for this purpose is not less, and sometimes greater, than that of which I have already spoken. The person charged with this duty must make provision with discretion and prudence, so as to prevail on the rich to rival each other in giving cheerfully, and yet not exasperate the minds of the charitable while providing for the relief of the sick. Here it is necessary to display even greater patience and zeal, for the sick are morose and sluggish, and unless the greatest care and diligence be employed in every detail, the least negligence may be the occasion of great injury to them.

17. In the next place the care of the virgins occasions still greater apprehension, inasmuch as they are a greater trust and a flock more noble than the others. For already many persons full of innumerable miseries have forced their way into the choir of those holy virgins. The sorrow, too, is greater here. And just as the fault of a free woman is more serious than

that of her slave, so the fault of a virgin exceeds that of a widow. For that the latter should trifle, and load each other with reproaches, and flatter, and act in an unseemly manner, and be seen everywhere, and go about in public is a matter of no great moment. But a virgin has undertaken a nobler contest, and aspires to higher perfection, and professes to lead on earth an angelic life, and while yet in the flesh to imitate the virtue of the incorporeal powers. It behoves her, then, not to pay useless and frequent visits, nor to engage in vain and unprofitable conversations, nor to know so much as the name of abuse and flattery. She needs, therefore, great protection and greater assistance. For the enemy of sanctity ever attacks and lays snares for virgins more than for others, eager to devour them should they stumble or fall. And many men also lay snares for them; and along with all this the impulse of nature assails them. A virgin, then, must be prepared to meet two enemies, one attacking from without, and the other rebelling within. Therefore, he who has care of them has reason for great apprehension: the peril, too, and the sorrow is greater should anything untoward happen; and God forbid that there should. For if the "father waketh for the daughter, who is shut up,* and the care for her taketh away his sleep," though his fear is only lest she should be sterile or pass the flower of her age, or be displeasing to her husband, what must he suffer whose concern is not for these things, but for what is much more precious! For here it is not a husband that is despised, but Christ Himself, nor does sterility entail disgrace merely, but the

* Septuagint version. The Vulgate has, "when no man knoweth." (Eccles. xlii, 9).

evil ends in the loss of the soul. For every tree, He says, that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire; * and she who is hateful to the bridegroom does not merely receive a bill of divorce, and go away, but she suffers eternal punishment as the penalty of His hatred. The father according to the flesh has many aids which render the guardianship of his daughter easy; for mother, and nurse, and many maids, and the walls of the house assist him to protect the virgin. For he does not permit her to go out frequently to places of public resort, and if she goes out, she need not be seen by any who meet her, for the shades of evening are no less a protection than the walls of a house to one who does not wish to be seen. Moreover, there is no reason obliging her to be seen by men, for neither the care of necessary business, nor annoyance from enemies, or the like, compels her to seek such a meeting. Her father holds the place of all, and she herself has no other concern than to say or do nothing unworthy of the modesty which befits her.

But in the other case there are many circumstances which render the father's care difficult, if not impossible. For he cannot keep his daughter at home with himself. Their dwelling together † would be neither becoming nor devoid of danger. And though there were no danger for themselves, and they continued to live in perfect sanctity, yet they

* Matt. iii, 10.

† When Chrysostom wrote, convents for nuns had not yet been established at Antioch. Those who made profession of virginity lived in their own homes. Chrysostom wrote two treatises on the subject referred to: I. *πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας παρθένους συνεισάκτους.* II. *περὶ τοῦ τας κανονικὰς μὴ συνοικεῖν ανδράσιν.* *Migne P.G.* vol. 47, col. 496-514, 514-532.

would be no less accountable for the scandal given to souls than if they had actually sinned. As this is impossible, it is no easy matter for him to know her disposition, to correct what is inordinate, to cultivate and improve what is good; neither can he easily attend to her manner of going about. For her poverty and unprotected state do not permit him to be a rigorous censor of the behaviour which becomes her. For as she is obliged to manage her own affairs, if disposed to act imprudently, she can find many pretexts for going about. It is necessary then to remove these pretexts, by ordering her to remain at home, and by supplying her with sufficient necessaries, and by giving her a maid to assist her in these matters, and she should be hindered from attending funerals and vigils, for that crafty serpent knows well how to spread his poison, even by means of good works. It is necessary also that the virgin be protected on all sides, and that she go out but seldom in the course of the year, and only when unavoidable and necessary business requires. And if anyone says that it is unnecessary for the bishop to attend to such matters, let him be assured that the difficulties in each case and the complaints fall back on him. It is, therefore, much better for him to manage all personally, and get rid of the blame he would have to bear for the faults of others, than to give up this administration to others and have to dread responsibility for their acts. Moreover, he who acts in person performs everything easily while he who is obliged to bring others over to his own view before taking action, does not receive as much relief by being spared the labour, as he does trouble and annoyance from those who oppose and resist his decisions. But it is impossible to enumerate all the sources of anxiety in what con-

cerns virgins. For even the enrolment of them gives no small trouble to him who is charged with that office.

Again, the office of judge occasions innumerable troubles, much labour, and even greater difficulties than secular judges have to meet with. For it is difficult to find out what is just, and when found, not to violate it. Not only is there labour and difficulty, but there is also no small risk. For there are instances of some of the weaker brethren who have made shipwreck of the faith, because, having got into trouble, they could not find a protector. Moreover, many who have suffered wrong are as much displeased with those who do not take up their cause as with those who injured them. They will take into account neither the pressure of business, nor the difficulties of the times, nor the limited power of priests; but like inexorable judges they will accept no other excuse save relief from the troubles which press upon them. And the man who cannot afford them this will never escape censure at their hands, however numerous be the excuses which he alleges, And as I have mentioned patronage, allow me to disclose to you another subject of complaint. Unless the bishop visits daily, even more than seculars do, he gives untold offence. Not only the sick, but the healthy also, desire to be visited, and many desire it not from a motive of piety, but rather as a mark of honour and respect. And if perchance, for a special reason and for the interest of the Church, he visits the rich or powerful more frequently, at once he gets the name of a courtier and a flatterer. But why speak of patronage and of visits? Even salutations occasion such annoying complaints as often to make one feel depressed and discouraged. For people

observe even one's looks; many scrutinise the least actions, the tone of the voice, the motion of the eyes and one's manner of laughter. He smiled blandly, they say, to such a one, and saluted him with a cheerful countenance and in a loud voice; but he treated me with less ceremony and in a formal way. And when conversing in company, if he does not cast his eyes all around they call it an insult. Who then, unless he be a man of great strength, can cope with so many accusers, so as either to escape accusation or to be acquitted when accused? Indeed, there ought to be no accusers, but as this is impossible, their accusations should be refuted. And since this is no easy matter, as there are some who delight in making rash and groundless charges, it is a duty to bear up bravely against the discouragement arising from those complaints. One who is justly accused can easily bear with the accuser, for as there is no accuser more severe than conscience, on that account when brought to trial by that most troublesome plaintiff we more easily bear with external accusers, as they are less severe. But when a man who is not conscious of guilt is falsely accused, he is at once roused to anger and falls into despondency, unless he has been accustomed to endure the folly of the people. For it is quite impossible for one who has been calumniated and condemned without cause not to be disturbed and affected by so great a wrong.

Who can tell the sorrow a bishop feels when he has to cut off any one from the communion of the Church? And would that the evil went no further than grief; but now there is no small mischief. For there is reason to fear that if the culprit be punished too severely he may experience what St Paul has spoken of: "Lest perhaps such a one be swallowed

up with overmuch sorrow." * In such a case very great prudence is necessary in order that what was intended for correction may not become the occasion of greater harm. For if he sins after such a remedy, the physician who did not duly lance the wound shares the blame of the consequences. How great then is the punishment which a man must expect who is called to account not only for his own negligences, but is also exposed to extreme danger for the sins of others? For if we shudder at the thought of giving an account of our own sins, as though we could not escape that fire, what punishment must he expect to suffer who has to answer for so many? Now in proof of the truth of this listen to the Blessed Paul, or rather to Christ speaking by him: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them, for they watch as being about to render an account of your souls." † Does that threat seem to you to give no reason for terror? You cannot say so! Now this is enough to prove even to the most incredulous and obstinate that it was not through pride and vainglory that I fled as I have done, but solely through fear for myself and from a sense of the importance of the office.

* 2 Cor. ii, 7. † Heb. xiii, 17.

BOOK IV

1. Not only those who are eager to enter the clerical state, but also those who enter it by compulsion, are severely punished if they sin.
2. Those who ordain the unworthy are liable to the same punishment as the ordained, even if they do not know the candidates.
3. Priests should have great talent for preaching.
4. They must be prepared to meet the attack of all—of Greeks, Jews and heretics.
5. They require great skill in argument.
6. The excellence of St. Paul in this respect.
7. He was remarkable, not only for his miracles, but also for his eloquence.
8. He desires that we also should excel in this.
9. If a priest does not possess this qualification, the faithful necessarily suffer great loss.

1. On hearing this, Basil paused a little, and said: Had you been eager to obtain this dignity, you might have had reason to entertain such fear. For when a man, by grasping at an office, professes himself fit for it, he cannot, after he has obtained it excuse himself for his mistakes on the ground of inexperience. He has already deprived himself of that excuse by his eagerness to get hold of the office. For when he freely and of his own accord puts himself forward he can no longer say: It was against my will I failed in this; it was against my will I mismanaged that. He who shall one day be our Judge shall say to him: "Since you knew your inexperience, and your incapacity to practise that art without making mis-

takes, why did you make haste, why did you venture to undertake what was beyond your strength? Who compelled you? Who forced you in spite of your resistance and your efforts to escape?" But no such thing will ever be said of you. Nor can you charge yourself with such a fault, for everybody knows that you did not make the least effort to obtain that dignity; the whole project came from others. Hence what leaves others no excuse for their faults supplies you with solid grounds for your justification.

Chrysostom. On this I shook my head, and smiling quietly at his simplicity, I said: I should be very glad, my dearest friend, that the case were as you say, not that I might be able to undertake the office, which I have just now declined. For even were I exposed to no chastisement for feeding the flock of Christ in a negligent and unskilful manner, I would regard it as worse than any chastisement to appear to be ungrateful to him who had so trusted me as to confide to me a charge of such importance. For what reason then should I desire that your opinion were not without foundation? That those wretched and unhappy men—for so they deserve to be called, who are incapable of rightly managing this business, though you should say they were compelled by force and erred through ignorance—that those wretched men might be able to escape the fire that is not extinguished, and the outer darkness and the worm that dieth not, and might not be separated, and perish with the hypocrites. But what can I do? Such a thing is quite impossible.

And if you permit me, I shall prove the truth of what I say, first of all by reference to the power of kings which is not of so much importance in the eyes of God as is the priesthood.

It was not at his own desire that Saul, the son of Cis,* was made king, but he went in quest of the asses, and began to consult the prophet concerning them, and the prophet spoke to him of a kingdom. Yet not even then did he show eagerness, though it was a prophet who spoke. But he declined and begged to be excused, saying: "Who am I, and what is my father's house?" What then? When he had made a bad use of the rank to which God had raised him, were these words sufficient to screen him from the wrath of Him who had made him king? Yet he might have said to Samuel when rebuked by him: "Did I hasten to assume the power of king? Did I intrude myself into this dignity? My desire was to lead the leisured and quiet life of a private individual; you forced me into this dignity. Had I remained in that humble station I should easily have escaped my present troubles. For were I one of the ordinary people, and undistinguished, I should never have been sent to execute the present task, nor would God have entrusted me with the war against the Amalecites. And had I not been entrusted with it, I should never have committed this fault." But all these reasons are insufficient to excuse him, and not merely insufficient, but they made his case worse, for they excited the anger of God still more. For one who has been honoured beyond his deserts ought not to put forward the greatness of his rank as an excuse for his faults, but he should use God's great love as a motive to make greater progress in virtue. To think that one is at liberty to sin because one has obtained higher dignity is nothing else than to try to make the goodness of God a pretext for sin,

* 1 Kings ix.

as the impious and the careless are wont to do. But such should not be our sentiments, nor should we be so foolish; but we should endeavour, as far as in us lies, to speak and think reverently.

But, to pass from the royal power to the priesthood with which we are now concerned, Heli did not make an effort to obtain that dignity. Yet what did that avail him when he sinned? And why do I say he made no effort to obtain the office? He could not have escaped from it, even if he desired, since the law laid it upon him. For he was of the tribe of Levi, and he was obliged to accept the dignity which devolved on him by descent. Yet even he suffered no slight punishment on account of the frowardness of his sons. What shall I say of him who was the first priest of the Jews, and of whom God spoke such great things to Moses? Because he was unable single-handed to resist the folly of so great a multitude, he was on the verge of destruction, had not the intercession of his brother averted the anger of God.*

And as I have mentioned Moses, what happened to him furnishes an excellent proof of what I assert. This same blessed Moses was so far from grasping at the chief place amongst the Jews that he declined it when offered, and though commanded by God he resisted so far as to provoke His anger.† And this was his disposition not only on that occasion, but later on, when he held supreme authority, he would gladly have died in order to be relieved of it. For he said, "Kill me if you are to deal with me thus." ‡ What then? When he sinned on the occasion of drawing water from the rock, were these objections sufficient

* Exod. xxxii, 10. † Exod. iv, 13. ‡ Numb. xi, 15.

to excuse him and to move God to pardon him? * For what other reason was he deprived of entering the promised land? For no other reason, as we all know, than for this fault, on account of which that admirable man did not obtain what was granted to his subjects. But after many fatigues and labours, after indescribable wanderings and wars and victories, he died outside the land, for sake of which he had undergone so many toils. After suffering the hardships of the voyage he did not enjoy the good things of the harbour. Do you understand then, how not only those who grasp at this dignity, but even those who are promoted to it by the efforts of others, have no excuse left to them if they sin? For if they who resisted, though God called them, were so severely punished, if nothing could exempt from such a calamity an Aaron or a Heli, or that blessed man who was a saint, a prophet, the meekest of men on earth, who spoke to God as to a friend, † it will hardly be a sufficient excuse for us who are so far inferior to them in virtue, to say that we are conscious of having made no effort to obtain this dignity. And most of all now when many ordinations have their origin, not in divine grace, but in human efforts.

God made choice of Judas and admitted him to that holy college and conferred the apostolic dignity on him as well as on the others; He even confided to him something more than to the rest, namely, the dispensation of money. ‡ What then? When he had fulfilled both offices badly, when he had betrayed Him whom he had undertaken to preach, and had misspent the money entrusted to his management, did he escape punishment? For this very

* Numb. xx, 11. † Numb. xx, 12. ‡ John xii, 6.

reason the chastisement he brought on himself was the greater, and justly so. For the dignities that have been conferred by God should not be used to offend Him, but to please Him the more. Now for a man who has been honoured more than others to claim exemption from the chastisement he deserves, would be the same as if one of the incredulous Jews, on hearing Christ say, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; if I had not done among them works which no other man hath done, they would not have sin," * should accuse his Saviour and benefactor, and say: "Why didst Thou come and speak? Why didst Thou perform miracles in order to punish us more severely?" But this is the language of madness and of utter insanity. For the Physician came to heal, not in order that He might condemn you with greater severity, but in order to deliver you completely from your malady. But you of your own choice have withdrawn yourself from His care; receive therefore a more severe punishment! For as you should have been delivered from your sins had you submitted to treatment, so you can no longer be purified from them, since you fled when you saw Him approach, and as you cannot, you will suffer punishment for them, as well as for having, as far as in you lay, rendered His solicitude vain. Therefore the punishment we shall endure after having been raised to honour by God is not the same as we should have suffered before promotion, but much more severe; for he who is not improved by benefits justly deserves to be more rigorously chastised. Since then this defence has been shown to be worthless, and since so far from saving, it rather

* John xv, 22.

betrays those who rely upon it, we should provide ourselves with some other means of safety.

Basil. Of what kind? For I no longer know where I am, with such fear and terror have your words inspired me.

Chrysostom. I beg and implore you, said I, be not so downcast. For me, as I am weak, my security is never to get into that position; but for you, as you are strong, your security is to place your hope of salvation in nothing else, after God's grace, but in doing nothing unworthy of such a gift and of God who bestowed it. For they deserve the severest punishment who, having by their own efforts obtained that dignity, do not make a good use of it, either from sloth, or malice, or inexperience. And for the same reason even those who obtained it without any efforts of their own merit no indulgence, but they too are deprived of every excuse. In my opinion then, though called and pressed by many, a man ought to pay no attention to them; but he should first of all examine his own soul, and weigh everything carefully, and only then should he yield to pressure. For no man would venture to undertake to build a house unless he were a builder, nor would any man undertake to heal the sick unless he had a knowledge of medicine. But though pressed by many, he would decline, and would not be ashamed to admit his ignorance. And will a man to whom the care of so many souls is about to be confided neglect to examine himself, and will he undertake the ministry, in spite of his ignorance, because he is urged by one, pressed by a second, and is afraid to offend a third? Does he not of his own choice cast himself into the abyss along with them? And while he might have been saved by himself, he drags others with him to

destruction. Whence can he hope for salvation? Whence can he obtain pardon? Who shall then be our advocates? Will it be those who now offer violence and compel us? But who will save themselves on that day? They too shall need intercessors in order to escape the fire. Now to prove that I do not say this to fill you with alarm, but because truth requires it, give ear to what the Blessed Paul says to his disciple Timothy, his true and well-beloved son: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man; neither be a partaker of other men's sins." * Do you perceive then, from what blame and from what chastisement I have as far as in me lay preserved those who wished to promote me to that dignity?

§ 2. For it is not enough for him who is elected to say in his defence, "It was not of my own accord I approached," "It was through ignorance I did not fly"; so it will not avail the electors to say, "I did not know the candidate." But their sin is the greater because they promoted one whom they did not know, and what they took to be their justification increases their responsibility. Is it not absurd that when they want to purchase a slave, men will show him to the physicians and require sureties for the purchase, and make inquiry from the neighbours, and after all this they are by no means confident, but they ask a long period of time for trial; and yet when they are about to promote any one to so great a ministry they give their vote without any further inquiry, rashly and at random, according as some one thinks fit to give testimony in favour of or against others. Who will be our intercessor on that day when they who should be our advocates will stand in need of advocates

* 1 Tim. v, 2.

themselves? Hence it behoves the elector to make a full examination beforehand, and much more is this the duty of him who is to be ordained. For though he may have his electors as partakers of his punishment if he sins, yet he will not himself escape chastisement, but he will be punished more severely, unless perhaps the electors acted contrary to their conscience. For if it is found that they have committed such a fault, and have for some reason or other elected a person whom they knew to be certainly unworthy, both will suffer equal punishment, and perhaps the punishment of those who elected an unworthy person will be more severe. For whoever affords an opportunity to one who has a mind to injure the Church is responsible for his misdeeds. But if the elector is open to none of these charges, and can say that he was deceived by the mistaken opinion of the public, he will not indeed go unpunished on that account, yet he will be punished less severely than the person elected. Why? Because it is reasonable to suppose that the electors, misled by the erroneous opinion of the public, acted as they did, but the person elected cannot, like them, say, "I did not know myself." Hence, as he is exposed to be more severely punished than the electors, he should examine himself more carefully than they; and if, through ignorance, they constrain him, he should come forward and state the reasons, which may disabuse them of their error, and by thus showing himself to be undeserving of election, free himself from so great a burden. How comes it that when warfare, commerce or other secular business is in question, a farmer will not undertake the management of a ship, nor a soldier of tillage, nor a pilot of warfare, even under the pressure of repeated threats

of death. The reason is, that they foresee the risk that would arise from their want of experience. When matters of no great importance are in question we act with such prudence and do not yield to the violence of pressure; and when everlasting punishment awaits those who are unable to fulfil the office of the priesthood, shall we rashly and readily throw ourselves into such danger under pretext that we have been constrained by others? But the judge will not admit such a plea on that day. We ought to look for greater security in spiritual than in carnal things; but now it is evident we do not give them even equal consideration. Tell me, pray, if we employed a man, believing him to be a mason, though not really such, and if he acceeded to our request, but on putting his hand to the material prepared for the building, spoiled both wood and stone, and built in such a way that the house would immediately fall, would it be enough for him to say in his defence that it was not of his own choice he had undertaken the work? By no means. And very justly. For he ought to have resisted, even though others urged him on. There is then no means of escaping punishment, when a man spoils wood and stone; and if a man ruins souls, and has been negligent in their edification, can it be thought sufficient for him to escape punishment, to say that he was constrained by others? * Is not this too silly? And I

* In the third homily on the Acts of the apostles, delivered when he was Archbishop of Constantinople, St. Chrysostom speaks as follows of the responsibility of priests: "I do not speak rashly, but as I feel and think. I do not think that many priests are saved, but that those who perish are far more numerous. The reason is that the office requires a great soul. For there are many things to make a priest swerve from rectitude, and he requires great vigilance on every side. Do you

have not yet added, that no man can be compelled against his will. But granting that he suffered great pressure, and that he yielded only when assailed by various stratagems, will this exempt him from punishment? I beg of you, let us not deceive ourselves so much, nor pretend to be ignorant of what is evident even to children. For assuredly on the accounting day this pretence of ignorance will not avail us: you were conscious of your own inability, and you did not make an effort to obtain that dignity? This was right and proper. You ought then to have declined it with the same resolution, though others called you to it; you were weak and incompetent when no one called you; but when there were found persons to bestow the dignity on you, did you all at once become strong? This is ridiculous and trifling, and merits the severest punishment. For this reason the Lord also exhorts a man who purposes to build

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not perceive how many qualities a bishop must have that he may be apt to teach, patient towards the wicked, firm and faithful in teaching the word? How many difficulties herein! Moreover, the loss of others is imputed to him. I need say no more. If but one dies without baptism, does it not entirely endanger his salvation? For the loss of one soul is so great an evil as no man can understand. If the salvation of one soul is of such importance that, for its sake, the Son of God became man and suffered so much, think of the penalty the loss of one soul will entail. If he who kills a man in this life deserves death, how much more the others? Say not then to me: It was a priest or a deacon that sinned. The faults of these are imputed to those who elected them. . . . "If then one were to approach to the chief priesthood as an office full of solicitude and anxiety, no one would undertake it. On the contrary now-a-days, we aspire to this dignity as if it were a secular office, for sake of glory and honour before men. What advantage will this honour bring?"

From the Third Homily on the Acts of the Apostles. Migne. P. G. vol. 60. col. 39-40.

a tower not to lay the foundations until he examines his resources, in order that he may not give the passers by great reason to laugh at him. Yet that man's loss goes no further than being laughed at. But in our case the punishment is unquenchable fire, the worm that dieth not, gnashing of teeth, exterior darkness, being separated and ranked with hypocrites. Yet my accusers are unwilling to give heed to any of these things, else they would have ceased to blame me for not wishing to perish to no purpose. For the duty laid upon us regards not the dispensation of wheat or barley, nor the care of oxen and sheep and the like, but the very body of Jesus. For the Church of Christ, according to the Blessed Paul, is the body of Christ; * and it is meet that he to whom that body is entrusted, should bestow the greatest attention on its welfare and its beauty, and should take great care that neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such stain mar its grace and comeliness. † And what is this but to make it, as far as man can do, worthy of its pure and blessed head? If those who strive to acquire the constitution of an athlete need physicians, training masters, a temperate regimen, frequent exercise, and endless attention, and if the neglect of the least thing upsets and spoils everything; how shall they whose office it is to take care of the body of Christ, which has to contend not against men, but against the invisible powers, how shall they preserve that body in health and vigour unless they are endowed with a virtue more than human, and are skilled in every useful method of healing the soul?

3. Know you not that that body is subject to more

* Col. i, 18. † Eph. v, 27.

diseases and accidents than our carnal body, and is more easily injured, and more slowly healed? The physicians of the body have, at their disposal, a variety of medicines, different sorts of instruments, a regimen adapted to the patient, and the quality of the air is sometimes of itself sufficient to cure the invalid. Sometimes, too, sleep coming on opportunely relieves the physician of all anxiety. Here, however, no such means can be devised, but after good example there is but one instrument and means of healing; that is preaching. This is the instrument, this the regimen, this the salubrious climate, this serves as medicine, as fire, and knife. If it be necessary to burn or to cut, this must be used, and if it be not used, all the rest is useless. By means of this, we raise up the soul when prostrate, and cool it when fevered, and cut off what is superfluous, and fill up deficiencies, and do everything else which contributes to the health of the soul. When there is question of leading a virtuous life, the example of another's life may arouse to emulation; but when the soul is sick by reason of false doctrine, then the preaching of the word is very necessary, not only for the security of the members of the household, but also to repel attacks from without. For if one possessed the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith, to such a degree as to be able to work miracles, and by miracles to stop the mouths of the froward, one would have no need to preach. Nay, even then, so far from being useless it would be very necessary. For the Blessed Paul made use of it though he was everywhere an object of admiration by reason of his miracles; and a certain other of the same apostolic college exhorts us to cultivate the power of preaching, saying: "Be ye ready to satisfy every one that asketh a reason of

you of that hope which is in you." * And for no other reason did all the apostles together entrust the care of the widows to Stephen and his companions † than that they themselves might have leisure to devote themselves to the ministry of the word. Yet if we possessed the power of working miracles, we should not so much require the power of eloquence, but since not a vestige of the former power is left, and many enemies menace us on every side, we must arm ourselves with the latter, to ward off their attacks and to strike them in turn.

4. Wherefore we should use great diligence "that the word of Christ may dwell in us abundantly." ‡ For we have to prepare not for one kind of combat alone, but the warfare is manifold and waged by various enemies. They do not all use the same weapons, nor the same method of attack. It behoves him who has to engage in conflict with all, to know the arts of all, and to be at once archer and slinger, brigadier and captain, soldier and general, foot-soldier and horseman, skilled in battles by sea and in besieging cities. For in military operations, whatever method one has learned, by that he repels assailants. Not so here, for unless one who hopes to conquer knows all the arts of war, the devil can send in his marauders by even one neglected point and destroy the flock. Not so when he perceives that the pastor is vigilant and acquainted with all his stratagems. Hence it is necessary to be guarded well and on every side. For as long as a city is fortified on all sides, it can despise its besiegers and remain in security; but if the wall be pierced even by the breadth of a postern,

* 1 Peter iii, 15. † Acts vi, 2. ‡ Col. iii, 16.

all the rest of the fortification, though intact, is of no avail. So too with the City of God. As long as the prudence and intelligence of the pastor surround it on all sides as with a wall, all the machinations of the enemy turn to their own disgrace and confusion, and those who dwell within remain secure; but as soon as a portion of the wall has been demolished, though it has not been all destroyed, the whole, so to speak, is lost by means of the part. For of what advantage is it to fight nobly against the Greeks, if the Jews plunder the Church; or that both are conquered if the Manichæans ravage it; or that all three are overcome, if the Fatalists slaughter the sheep within the fold? Why enumerate all the heresies of the devil? Yet if the shepherd is unable to refute them all successfully, the wolf may succeed even by means of one, in devouring the greater portion of the flock. In war, victory or defeat depends only on those who are engaged in the struggle, but here the contrary is the case. Oftentimes the conflict of others has given victory to those who had not even engaged in the struggle, nor made any effort whatever, but sat at their ease; while he who has not had experience has been transpierced by his own sword, and has become a laughing-stock to friends and foes. For instance—I shall try to explain to you what I mean by an example—the followers of Valentinian and of Marcion, and others infected with the same error, expunge from the catalogue of the holy Scriptures the Law given by God to Moses. The Jews, on the other hand, hold it in such honour that, notwithstanding the distinction of times, they earnestly endeavour to observe it in its fulness, contrary to the ordinance of God. But the Church of God, avoiding both extremes, takes a

middle course, and neither subjects itself to the yoke of the Law, nor permits it to be condemned, but praises it though abrogated because it was useful for a time. Now whoever has to resist both must observe the like moderation. For if, desiring to show that the Jews cling unreasonably to the Old Law, he begins to find fault with it unsparingly, he gives no small handle to the heretics who wish to depreciate it. But if in order to silence the latter he extols it beyond measure and praises it as though it were necessary at the present day, he strengthens the arguments of the Jews. Those, again, who are infected with the frenzy of Sabellius, or the folly of Arius, have both greatly lapsed from sound faith, yet both bear the name of Christians. Now if their tenets be examined, it will be found that the former are no better than the Jews, differing from them only about names, and that the latter approach very near the heresy of Paul of Samosata, but that both are far from the truth. Here then there is great peril; the way is straight and rugged and bounded by precipices on either side, and there is no small reason to fear lest, while trying to strike one opponent, you be yourself wounded by the other. For if you say there is one Godhead, Sabellius will interpret the expression in his own sense. If you distinguish and say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are distinct, Arius presses on, and interprets the distinction of persons to mean diversity of nature. It is necessary therefore to turn away from and shun at the same time the impious confusion of the one and the foolish diversity of the other, confessing that the Godhead of Father and Son and Holy Ghost is one, but adding that there are three persons. In this way you will be able to repel the attacks of both.

I could mention many other conflicts wherein a man will receive innumerable wounds unless he carries on the contest with courage and accuracy.

5. Who can enumerate the disputes of those within the Church? These are no less numerous than the attacks from without, and they cause greater trouble to the teacher. Some persons from curiosity wish to investigate all manner of questions, rashly and uselessly, though the knowledge of them can be of no profit to the learner, and though in some cases they cannot be solved. Others again ask for an explanation of the judgments of God, and strive to fathom that great deep. "For Thy judgments are a great deep." * And you will find few concerned about faith and morals, while many curiously search into those things which cannot be understood, and the examination of which offends God. For when we try to learn what He does not wish us to know, and what we shall never know—how could we against His will?—the only advantage we gain is to incur danger by the inquiry. Yet, though this is the case, when one stops with authority the mouths of the curious, he earns for himself the reputation of being proud and ignorant. Therefore the bishop needs great prudence to withdraw the people from foolish questions, and at the same time to keep himself clear of the aforesaid charges. To meet all these difficulties he has no other means but the preaching of the word; and if he is deficient in talent for that, the minds of the faithful, I mean of the weaker and more curious among them, will be no better than vessels tempest-tossed. Hence it behoves a priest to make every effort to acquire that talent.

* Ps. xxxv, 7

Basil. Why then, said he, did Paul make no effort to acquire that talent? * and is not ashamed of his want of eloquence; but openly admits his ignorance, and that too in a letter to the Corinthians, so celebrated and so proud of their eloquence?

6. Chrysostom. This, said I, is what has misled many and made them more negligent about real instruction. For being unable to fathom the meaning of the apostle and to understand the sense of his words, they spent their time in somnolence and sloth, holding in esteem not that ignorance of which Paul speaks, but from which he was farther removed than any man under heaven. But let us reserve this for another occasion. Meanwhile here is what I hold. Granting that he was unlearned in that respect, as they will have it, what has that to do with the men of the present day? He possessed a power greater than that of preaching and capable of producing greater effects. For when he merely appeared, though he uttered not a word, he was an object of terror to the devils. Now all the men of the present day together could not accomplish by endless prayers and tears as much the aprons of Paul once accomplished.† By prayer Paul raised the dead to life, and worked wonders so great that by those without he was taken for a god; ‡ and before he passed from this life he was deemed worthy to be elevated to the third heaven, and to hear words which it is not permitted to the nature of man to hear. § But the men of the present day (and I do not mean to say anything disagreeable or offensive, for I speak not by way of insult, but from a sense of astonishment) how is it they do not tremble to put themselves in comparison with such

* 2 Cor. xi, 6.
† Acts xix, 12.
‡ Acts xiv, 11.
§ 2 Cor. xii, 2.

a man? For if we leave miracles out of the question and come to the life of that blessed man and examine his angelic conduct, we shall see the athlete of Christ excel in this respect even more than in miracles. Why mention his zeal, his modesty, his frequent perils, his constant cares, his incessant solicitude for the churches, his compassion for the poor, his many trials, his repeated persecutions, his daily deaths?* For what spot in the world, what continent, what sea was not a witness of the contests of this just man? The desert knew him, for it received him often in his perils. He endured every form of attack and obtained every kind of victory, and never ceased to combat and to conquer. But I know not how I have been led on to insult the man, for his achievements surpass all expression, and all that I can say, as far as the masters of eloquence surpass me. But not even thus will I desist (for that blessed man will judge me, not by my success but by my intention) until I have stated what as far surpasses all that has been said as he surpasses all men. After so many achievements, after victories without number, he prayed that he might be cast into hell and consigned to everlasting punishment, that the Jews who had frequently stoned him, and, as far as in them lay, put him to death, might be saved and come to Christ.† Who longed for Christ so much as he, if indeed that must be called longing, and not something greater than longing? Shall we, then, compare ourselves with him, after the many favours which he received from above and all the virtue he displayed in his daily life? Could there be anything more audacious? That he was not so ignorant as these men imagine

* 2 Cor. xi, 26. † Rom. ix, 3.

it now remains for me to prove. For they call a man ignorant not only when he is unskilled in the artifices of profane literature, but also when he is unable to defend true doctrine. And justly. But Paul does not profess himself ignorant in both these respects, but only in one of the two; and to mark this he said that he "was rude in speech, but not in knowledge." * Were I looking for the smoothness of Isocrates, the strength of Demosthenes, the gravity of Thucydides, the sublimity of Plato, this testimony of Paul might be quoted. But I pass over all these qualities together with the exquisite ornament of profane writers, and I make no account of diction and style. Let a man be deficient in diction, and let his style be simple and plain, provided he is not ignorant in knowledge and in accuracy of doctrine, and provided, to cover his own sloth, he does not rob that blessed man of his greatest excellence and his chiefest praise.

7. How, I ask, did he confound the Jews that dwelt in Damascus,† when as yet he had not commenced to perform miracles? How did he overcome the Hellenists? Why was he sent to Tarsus? Was it not because he excelled in eloquence and pressed them so hard that, being unable to endure defeat, they were provoked to kill him? For as yet he had not begun to work miracles, nor can it be asserted that he was regarded with admiration on account of the fame of his miracles, and that his adversaries were overcome by their veneration for him. So far he overcame by his eloquence alone. How did he contend and dispute at Antioch with those who attempted to introduce Jewish practices? ‡ Was it not by his eloquence alone that he made converts

* 2 Cor. xi, 6. † Acts ix, 22. ‡ Gal. ii, 11.

of the Areopagite and his wife, citizens of that most superstitious city? * How came Eutychus to fall from the window? Was it not because he was occupied in listening to his discourses until far in the night? † How did he act at Thessalonica and Corinth, at Ephesus and at Rome? Did he not spend whole days and nights in expounding the Scriptures? What shall I say of his discourses against the Epicureans and the Stoics? ‡ For if I entered into every detail I should never conclude. Since then before he worked miracles, and while he worked them, he evidently displayed great power of eloquence, how will they still dare to style him ignorant, who by his conversation and his discourses was an object of admiration to all? Why did the Lycaonians take him for Mercury? § For the fact that they were taken for gods was due to their miracles, but the fact that he was taken for Mercury was due not to miracles but to his eloquence. In what did that blessed man surpass the other apostles? Why is he spoken of throughout the whole world? Why is he most of all admired not only by us, but also by Jews and Greeks? Is it not on account of the excellence of his epistles, by which he benefited not only the faithful who lived at that time, but also those who have lived from that time till now, and those who shall live until the final coming of Christ, and he shall never cease to do so as long as the human race exists? For his writings, like a wall of adamant, protect all the churches throughout the entire world. Even now he stands in our midst like a valiant athlete "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ, and destroying counsels and every height

* Acts xvii, 34.
† Acts xx, 9.
‡ Acts xvii, 18.
§ Acts xiv, 11.

that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." * All this he does by means of those admirable epistles, full of divine wisdom, which he has left us. And his writings are useful, not only to refute false doctrine and to defend that which is true, but they are also of no small utility to instruct us how to lead a good life. For even now by means of them the prelates of the Church deck and adorn and form to spiritual beauty the chaste Virgin whom he espoused to Christ. † By these they ward off the diseases which attack her, and preserve her in health. Such remedies did that ignorant man leave us, possessing a power which they who frequently use them know by experience. And that he devoted much attention to eloquence is evident from what I am about to relate.‡

* 2 Cor. x, 4, 5. † 2 Cor. xi, 2.

‡ St Chrysostom entertained the most profound veneration for St Paul. Besides the eulogium in the fourth book on the Priesthood, there are found in his writings seven sermons in praise of St Paul, and a sermon in praise of the two apostles St Peter and St Paul. In the 32nd homily on the Epistle to the Romans he also gives utterance to his admiration of the Princes of the Apostles as follows: "It is for this reason I love Rome, though I might praise it for other reasons—for its magnificence, its antiquity, its beauty, its populousness, its power, its achievements in war—but passing over all these, I call it blessed, because Paul, while alive, wrote to them, and so loved them that he preached to them and ended his life amongst them. Hence that city has become more famous on this account than for all other reasons. Like a great and strong body, it has two shining eyes, namely, the bodies of those two saints. The heavens are not so bright when the sun sends forth its rays as the city of Rome sending forth those lamps throughout the world. From hence Paul shall be rapt up; from hence also Peter. Consider with awe what a spectacle Rome shall behold: Paul arising suddenly from that shrine along with Peter, and borne aloft to meet the Lord! What a rose Rome shall present to Christ! With what a double crown is that city decked! with what a chain of gold is it girt! What fountains it possesses! For this reason I

8. Give ear to what he says in his epistle to his disciple, "Attend to reading, to exhortation, and to

admire that city; not for its wealth of gold, nor for its columns, nor any such ornament, but on account of these pillars of the Church. Who will grant me to embrace the body of Paul, to clasp his sepulchre in my arms, to behold the dust of that body, which filled up what was wanting of the sufferings of Christ, and bore His marks, and sowed everywhere the seed of the Gospel. . . .? Would that I might behold the dust of that mouth, by which Christ spoke great and ineffable things, greater even than He Himself had spoken. . . . Would that I might behold the dust, not only of that mouth, but also of that heart, which might be called without error the heart of the whole world. . . . That heart was so expansive as to receive within it whole cities, peoples and nations. . . . Would that I might behold the dust of those hands, that were in bonds, by whose imposition the Holy Ghost was given, and by which those epistles were written! Would that I might behold those eyes, which were first struck blind and then enlightened for the salvation of the whole world! . . . Would that I might behold the dust of those feet, that wearied not in traversing the world! Would that I might behold the sepulchre in which reposes that armour of justice, armour of light, those members which now live, but while he lived were dead, in all of which Christ lived, crucified to the world; members of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, clothed with Christ, a holy building united to the spirit, pierced with the fear of God, marked with the marks of Christ. That body, together with the body of Peter, defends that city more securely than any tower or ramparts without number. For he honoured Peter when on earth: "I went up to see Peter," whence his charity made him accompany him, going forth from hence. . . ."

Considering all these things, let us stand courageously, for Paul also was a man who shared the same nature as we, and was in all things like to us. But because he manifested great love of Christ, he ascended above the heavens and has taken his place among the angels. Therefore, if we also are willing to arouse ourselves a little, and to stir up that fire within us, we may emulate that holy man. For if that were impossible he would not have said: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Let us therefore not merely regard him with admiration and awe, but let us imitate him, that when we depart from hence we may merit to see him and be partakers of his unspeakable glory.—*32nd Hom. on Epist. to the Romans. Migne P. G.* vol. 60., col. 678–680.

doctrine," * and he adds what will be the consequence: "For doing this you will save yourself and them that hear you"; and again, "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient." † And further on he says: "But continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and because from thy infancy thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee." ‡ And again, "All scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct unto justice, that the man of God may be perfect." § Listen also to the rule he lays down for Titus when speaking of the appointment of bishops: "For a bishop," he says, "must embrace the faithful word, which is according to doctrine that he may be able to convince the gainsayers." ‖ How then could one who is ignorant, as they will have it, convince and silence the gainsayers? What need is there to attend to reading and to the scriptures if we should embrace such ignorance? But this is a pretext and an excuse and a cloak for negligence and sloth.

But some one will say these injunctions regard bishops. But it is of bishops we are now speaking. Now, that you may see that this advice is applicable also to the faithful, hearken to what he says in another epistle: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom." ¶ And again: "Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man." ** What concerns being ready to give an answer is

* 1 Tim. iv, 13. ‡ 2 Tim. iii, 14. ‖ Titus i, 9. ** Col. iv. 6.
† 2 Tim. ii, 24. § 2 Tim. iii, 16. ¶ Col. iii, 16.

addressed to all. * Writing to the Thessalonians, he says: "Edify one another, as you also do." † But when he speaks of priests he says: "Let priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the Word and in doctrine." ‡ For this is the most perfect end of doctrine, to lead their disciples by act and by word to the blessed life which Christ has ordered. To teach, works are not enough. This is not my doctrine, but that of the Saviour Himself. "But he," He says, "that shall do and teach, he shall be called great." § Now, if to do were the same as to teach, the second clause would be superfluous; it would have been sufficient to say: "He that shall do." Now, since he distinguishes both, he shows that works and teaching are two distinct things, and that to effect perfect edification each stands in need of the other. Do you not hear what that elect vessel of Christ says to the ancients of the Ephesians? "Therefore, watch, keeping in memory that for three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you." ‖ What need was there of tears or of words of admonition, since his apostolic life was so conspicuous? Such a life is a great assistance to us in keeping the commandments, but I should not affirm that of itself it is enough.

9. When a dispute has arisen concerning doctrine, and all use the same scriptures in support of their contention, what help does a good life afford? Of what advantage are so many labours, if after so many toils, one falls into heresy through ignorance, and is cut off from the Church, a fate which, to my know-

* 1 Pet. iii, 15. † 1 Thess. v, 11. ‡ 1 Tim. v, 17. § Matt. v, 19. ‖ Acts xx, 31.

ledge, has befallen many? What does an austere life avail him? Nothing. Just as soundness in faith is of no avail, if morals be corrupt. For these reasons it behoves him whose office is to teach to be most of all skilled in such contests. For though he himself stands secure and unharmed by the gainsayers, yet when the multitude of the simple faithful, who are subject to him, see their leader overcome, and unable to reply to his adversaries, they lay the blame of the defeat, not on his incapacity, but on the doctrine, as though it were unsound; and by the ignorance of one, the whole people are brought to utter ruin. And though they do not all go over to the enemy, they are led to doubt those doctrines which they might have held with confidence, and they can now no longer hold with the same firmness those tenets which they before held with unshaken faith. And in consequence of the defeat of their teacher, such a tempest assails their minds that the evil ends in shipwreck. But what destruction, what a fire is heaped on his unhappy head on account of each of those who perish, I need not tell you, for you are well aware of it. Was it then arrogance, was it vainglory in me, to be unwilling to be the cause of the ruin of so many, and to draw upon myself a chastisement greater than I already deserved? Who can say so? No man who does not wish to censure without reason and philosophize on the calamities of others.

BOOK V

1. Preaching requires great labour and diligence.
2. He who is appointed to that office should despise praise, and yet be eloquent.
3. If he does not possess both qualifications, he will be of no advantage to people.
4. He must most of all despise envy.
5. A learned man requires greater diligence than one who is not learned.
6. One should not quite despise, nor yet set great value on the unreasoned judgment of the people.
7. The preacher ought to have in view in his sermons to please God alone.
8. He who does not despise praise is exposed to many troubles.

1. How much skill a teacher requires to engage in discussions in defence of the truth, I think I have sufficiently shown. But I have also to mention another circumstance which is the cause of infinite trouble, or rather I should say that it is not the cause but those who cannot make a proper use of it. For the thing itself is the source of salvation and of many blessings, when used by zealous and good men. What, then, is it? The great labour bestowed on discourses addressed to the people. For, in the first place, many of the faithful are unwilling to regard preachers in the light of teachers, but outstepping the rank of learners they assume the role of those who sit as spectators at profane theatrical displays; and as the people there are divided, and take sides, some for one, and some for another, so here, too, they are divided,

one for one, and others for another, and they listen to the preachers either with favour or with dislike. Nor is this the only trouble; there is another, no less serious; for should a preacher introduce into his discourse anything taken from another, he is subjected to reproaches greater than if he had been guilty of theft. And oftentimes, though he has taken nothing from anyone, but is merely suspected of it, he is treated as if he were guilty. But why speak of the compositions of others? One cannot always make use even of the fruits of one's own labour. For the people are wont to listen not for profit, but for amusement, just as if they sat as judges of the merits of actors or musicians; and the talent for oratory, which I have just now found fault with, has become a greater object of ambition than it is to the sophists in their contests with one another.

2. A preacher, then, must have nobility of soul, far beyond my weakness, in order to check that inordinate and useless passion of the people, and to direct their attention to what is more profitable, and so lead and control them without being himself the slave of their fancies. Now this can only be attained by two means: that is, by contempt of praise, and by a talent for oratory.

For if one of the two be wanting, that which remains is useless without the other. If a preacher despises praise, but does not teach doctrine "seasoned with grace and salt," * he becomes contemptible to all, and produces no fruit, notwithstanding his magnanimity. But though irreproachable in doctrine if he yields to the glory of being applauded the loss to himself and the people is as great as in the former

* Col. iv. 6.

case, since through a desire of praise he preaches to please his audience rather than to improve them. And just as one who is not influenced by praise, but is destitute of oratorical talent, neither yields to the whims of the people, nor is capable of doing them the least benefit, through his inability to preach ; so the man, who is carried off by the desire of praise, though capable of improving the people, instead of that treats subjects calculated to please them, and by that means purchases their applause.

3. It is necessary, then, that an excellent ruler should be possessed of both qualities, so that one may not be injured by the other. For when a preacher rises and begins his discourse in a manner capable of arousing the slothful, if he then stumbles and stops short, and is obliged to blush for his deficiency, the fruit of what he has delivered well is lost. For those who were rebuked by what was said, are hurt, and being otherwise unable to avenge themselves, they tax the preacher with ignorance, thinking by this means to cover their own confusion. Therefore, like a good charioteer, he should have attained perfection in both these qualities, so as to be at liberty to use either when necessary. For when he is himself without reproach, he is at full liberty to rebuke or show indulgence to all his subjects as he pleases, but without that quality he cannot easily do so. One should then display magnanimity, not merely in despising praise, but he should also carry it so far, that the fruit of it may not be imperfect.

4. What else ought to be despised ? Envy and jealousy. One should not immoderately fear and dread unreasonable accusations, nor on the other hand overlook them (for a bishop must be prepared to bear unreasonable blame). But one should

endeavour speedily to refute them even when they are false and when they originate with persons of no account. For nothing so much increases good and bad report as the untutored people. For as they are wont to hear and speak without reflection, they talk of every rumour regardless of its truth. Therefore, one ought not to despise the people, but one should uproot evil suspicions at the very commencement by persuading the accusers, however unreasonable they are, and by leaving nothing undone to remove the unfavourable report. But when we have done all in our power for that purpose, if our censurers will not be persuaded, we must then despise the rumours. For if a man allows himself to be disheartened by such occurrences, he will never be able to accomplish anything noble or worthy of admiration. For dejection and constant anxiety are capable of destroying strength of soul, and leading to utter weakness. A priest, therefore, should have for his people the sentiments of a father for his tenderest children. And as we are not concerned when children insult and strike us, and lament, nor are we elated when they laugh and rejoice with us; so a priest ought not to be elated by the praise of the people, nor cast down by their unreasonable dispraise. This, my dear friend, is a matter of difficulty, and I think perhaps even impossible. For not to feel pleased at being praised, is, I am inclined to think, what has happened to no man. Now he who is pleased naturally desires to enjoy what gave him pleasure; and he who desires any enjoyment must needs be distressed and pained when he fails to obtain it. Just as those who rejoice in riches are pained when they fall into poverty; and those who are accustomed to delicacies can never bear the use of simple fare;

so it is with lovers of praise. Not only, if they are blamed without cause, but also if they are not continually praised, they pine away with a species of hunger, especially if they have grown up amid praise or hear others praised. If a man with such a disposition undertakes the task of instructing, can you imagine how many troubles and how many sorrows he will have to bear? As the sea cannot be without waves, so his soul cannot be without anxiety and sorrow.

5. For should a man possess great oratorical talent (a thing which falls to the lot of few), not even then will he be free from continual labour. For it is not nature but education that makes an orator, and though a man has reached the perfection of eloquence, he will soon lose it unless he cultivates his talent by constant labour and exercise. Hence the most learned require to labour more than those who are less learned, and if both neglect to labour, their loss is not equal, but the difference is as great as that between the capacity of each. No one finds fault with the latter, if they are unable to say anything of value, while all blame the former, unless they produce something which surpasses the reputation they have already attained. Moreover, the one obtains great praise even for a discourse of moderate merit, while the other is not only not praised, but is even blamed by many unless he produces something most admirable and wonderful. For the audience sits in judgment, not so much on the discourse, as on the reputation of the orator. Hence when an orator surpasses all others in talent, he must study and labour more than others. Not to succeed always in everything, which is the common lot of men, is not permitted to him; but if his discourse does not come up to his reputation, he is scoffed at and censured by the public. In his

case, no one takes into account that despondency, or trouble, or anxiety, or passion has darkened the clearness of his mind, and hindered his giving clear expression to his thoughts, and that, being a man, he cannot be ever the same, nor succeed always in all things, and that it is natural he should sometimes fail and display less than his accustomed vigour. They are unwilling to take any of these things into account, but they load him with blame, judging him as if he were an angel. Moreover, men are wont to overlook the good qualities of their neighbour, however numerous and great; but if any defect appears, be it ever so slight or long past, they soon perceive it, and lay hold on it, and never forget it. And that defect, though small and trivial, often dims the glory of many great qualities.

6. You see then, my dear friend, that a preacher of talent requires to use greater diligence, and in addition to diligence, he requires greater patience than all those whom I have mentioned above. For many attack him without cause, and rashly, for no other reason than that they are indignant at his being esteemed by all! And he must bear their bitter envy with courage. For, as they cannot conceal the detestable hatred they have unreasonably conceived, they insult and find fault, and speak ill of him in private and calumniate him in public. Now if a man takes offence, and feels hurt at these things, before long he will be consumed with chagrin. For they do not exercise their vengeance in person only. They try to do so by means of others, and sometimes they take up a man destitute of oratorical talent, and praise and admire him beyond his deserts, and they do this sometimes through passion and sometimes through ignorance and envy combined; not

for the purpose of praising the man who does not deserve it, but to destroy the reputation of the other. Nor is it against such as these only that our orator has to contend, but oftentimes against the inexperience of the whole people. For it is impossible that the whole audience should consist of persons of distinction; the bulk of the faithful is made up of the uninstructed, while the rest are, it is true, more intelligent, but as far inferior to those who are capable of forming an opinion of a discourse as the general body is inferior to them. One or two only possess such capacity. It necessarily follows that he who speaks with greatest eloquence will obtain least applause, and sometimes none at all. An orator should be prepared to meet courageously such anomalies, and should pardon those who treat him thus through ignorance, and should mourn for those miserable and wretched men who act through envy, and he should hold it as certain that his talent is not diminished by either. For if a good painter, who excels in his art, sees that one of his best pictures is laughed at by persons unskilled in the art, he should not lose heart nor consider the picture inferior on account of the verdict of the ignorant; neither should he, on account of the admiration of the unskilled, look upon an inferior painting as admirable and valuable.

7. Let the excellent artist be himself the judge of his own handiwork, and let what he has produced be considered beautiful or the contrary, when the mind of the artist approves it, and let no attention be paid to the erroneous and unskilled opinion of persons unacquainted with the art. Let not the man who has undertaken the office of preaching, then, give heed to the praise of the people, nor lose heart if

it fail him. But while he makes it the purpose of his discourse to please God—for this and not the applause and praise of men should be the rule and only aim of his best efforts—if he be praised by men, let him not despise the praise, and if he receive no applause from his audience, let him not seek it, nor feel hurt. For to feel conscious that the aim and purpose of his teaching has been to please God is sufficient recompense for his toil, and even the most valuable of all.

8. If the preacher permits himself to be carried away by a desire of praise, his labour and his talent will profit him nothing. For the mind that cannot bear the foolish criticism of the people becomes discouraged and throws aside zeal for preaching. Hence it is very important to learn to despise praise. For if a man has not learned that, whatever be his talent for oratory, he will not preserve it. And if you consider carefully the case of the man who is deficient in that talent, you will find that he needs to despise praise no less than the other. For if he permits himself to be overcome by the desire of praise, he will be driven to commit many faults. For being unable to equal orators of repute, he will not shrink from plotting against them and envying them, and finding fault with them, and doing many other such unseemly things. And he will risk everything, were it even the loss of his soul, to lower the reputation of others to the level of his own. Moreover, he will refrain from effort and labour, as though a kind of torpor had taken possession of his soul. To labour much, and to earn but little praise, is a thing which casts into a profound lethargy a man who cannot despise praise. Even the husbandman, when he tills a sterile soil, and is obliged to cultivate stony

ground, soon desists from labour unless he possesses great alacrity for work, or is urged on by the fear of hunger. Now if eloquent men require so much exercise to preserve their talent, what difficulty, what effort, what trouble, will he have to endure to get together even a little with much toil, who has made no preparation, but is obliged, in the very heat of delivery, to reflect on what he is to say! And, if one of lower rank and dignity surpass him, he will require a mind, so to say, divine, not to be overcome by jealousy and fall into dejection. For that a man of superior dignity should bear with courage, to be surpassed by one who is his inferior, is a mark not of an ordinary mind like mine, but of one that is unconquerable. If the man who enjoys repute is virtuous and modest, the evil is to some extent tolerable. But if he is bold and boastful and vain, he will render the life of the other so bitter as to make him daily desire death, insulting him in public, and deriding him in secret, and day by day taking to himself something of the other's authority, and aspiring to be himself everything. And in all this he possesses the greatest security by his talent as an orator, by the attachment of the people, and the affection of all the faithful. Do you not know the great passion for eloquence which has taken possession of the minds of Christians, and that those who practise it are held in honour, not only by those without, but also by the members of the household of the faith? Who, then, can bear the disgrace that when he speaks all are still and seem bored, and look forward to the conclusion of the discourse as a relief from their sufferings; while if another speaks, at even greater length, they gladly pay attention, are displeased when he wishes to conclude, and take it ill

when he wishes to be silent? Though all these things seem to you unimportant and easy to despise, as you are inexperienced, yet they are sufficient to quench zeal, and weaken energy of soul, unless a man withdrawing himself from all human infirmity, endeavours to resemble the incorporeal powers, who are not moved by envy, nor by a love of glory, nor by any other such passion. If any man is able to trample on the love of popularity, that monster so difficult to capture, to overcome and to tame, and then to cut off its many heads, or rather to hinder them from growing at all, he will be able to bear those numerous insults, and to enjoy tranquillity. But if he is not free from it, he will assuredly involve himself in a warfare of many shapes, in constant alarms, in discouragement, and in innumerable other sufferings. Why speak of other difficulties which no man can describe or understand, unless he has had practical experience of them?

BOOK VI

1. Priests are accountable even for the sins of others.
2. They require greater perfection than monks.
3. A monk enjoys greater repose than a bishop.
4. To intercede for the world, and other tremendous mysteries are confided to priests.
5. A priest should be prepared for all things.
6. The life of a monk is not such a proof of virtue as the life of a good prelate.
7. The life of a monk is different from that of a bishop living in the world.
8. The practice of virtue is more easy for monks than for those who labour for the good of the people.
9. The suspicions of the people are not to be despised even when groundless.
10. It is no great difficulty to save one's own soul.
11. The sins of priests are more severely punished than those of the faithful.
12. Chrysostom's sorrow and fear at the prospect of the priesthood, shown by examples.
13. The assults of the devil are more dreadful than any warfare.

1. So far I have described what regards the present life; but how shall we endure what takes place hereafter, when we shall each be compelled to give an account of the trust committed to us? For the penalty is not limited to disgrace, but eternal punishment follows. Though I have already cited the words: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them, for they watch, as being to render an account of your souls," * I will not pass them over in silence now. For the fear of that menace continually disturbs

* Heb. xiii, 17.

my mind. If it were better for him who scandalizes even one of these little ones that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea; if all who wound the conscience of their brethren sin against Christ Himself, what shall they not suffer; how severely shall they be tormented who ruin not one or two or three, but so great a multitude? For it will not be possible to plead inexperience, or allege ignorance, or put forward necessity, or compulsion as an excuse. The faithful might more reasonably have recourse to that plea for their own sins, than bishops in reference to the sins of others. Why? Because one who is appointed to correct the ignorance of others, and to give warning of the approach of the war waged by the devil, cannot plead ignorance and say, "I did not hear the trumpet, I did not foresee the war." For he was appointed for that purpose, as Ezechiel says, to sound the trumpet for others, to give warning of the approach of danger. Therefore, no excuse will save him from punishment, even though but one be lost. "For if the watchmen on the approach of the sword sound not the trumpet, nor give the signal to the people, and if the sword come and cut off a soul, he indeed is taken in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman." *

Cease then from forcing me to incur a judgment so inevitable. For we are not speaking of the command of an army, nor of the authority of a king, but of an office which would require the virtue of an angel.

2. The soul of a priest should be purer than the rays of the sun, that he may not be abandoned by

* Ezech. xxxiii, 7.

the Holy Ghost, and that he may be able to say, "I live, now no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." * For if those who dwell in solitude, far from city and courts, and are free from the confusion arising from them, and who always enjoy rest and tranquillity, do not, for all that, put their trust in that manner of life, but surround themselves on every side with many other safeguards, and strive to act and speak at all times with great circumspection, that they may be able, as far as human weakness permits, to approach to God with confidence and perfect purity, what virtue, what efforts, pray, are necessary to enable a priest to keep his soul unstained and preserve its spiritual beauty undefiled? He stands in need of far greater purity than they, and though he needs greater purity, he is exposed to greater dangers, which may sully him unless he uses constant vigilance, and great attention to hinder their access to his soul. For beauty of countenance and voluptuous movements, and affected gait, soft tones, outlining of the eyes, and painting of the cheeks, arrangement of tresses, colouring of the hair, costly raiment, varied ornaments of gold, beautiful gems, the fragrance of perfumes and the like, which the female sex affect, are capable of making an impression on the mind, unless it be hardened by great austerity and self restraint. That the mind should be disturbed by these things is not surprising, but that by the very opposite of these the devil should be able to smite and wound the souls of men is matter for great astonishment and bewilderment. For some who escaped the above-mentioned snares have been captured by others quite different. For an unadorned face, unkempt hair, untidy dress,

* Gal. ii, 20.

an unartificial appearance, a simple disposition, plain speech, an unaffected gait, a disagreeable voice, poverty, lowliness, want of protection and loneliness, have moved him who witnessed them first to compassion, and then led him to utter ruin.

3. And many who escaped the above-mentioned toils, such as ornaments of gold, perfumes, dress, and the like, have easily fallen into the others which are so different, and have perished. Since, then, by poverty and by riches, by ornament and by neglect of ornament, by affected and by unaffected airs: in a word, by all the things above-mentioned, a war is enkindled in the soul of him who beholds them, and since engines of war encompass him on every side how can he have peace amidst so many dangers and snares? What refuge can he find, I do not say not to be completely overcome, for this is no great difficulty, but to preserve his mind undisturbed by unclean thoughts? I pass over honours, the source of innumerable evils.* For the honours paid by women weaken the vigour of wisdom, and often overcome a man unless he is very vigilant in guarding against such snares. And as regards the honours paid by men, unless one accepts them with great magnanimity, he is seized by two opposite impressions, by the servility of flattery, and by the folly of arrogance. For on the one hand he is led to be obsequious to those who praise him, and on the other, in consequence of the honour he receives from them,

* In the third homily on the Acts of the Apostles, St. Chrysostom gives instances of the honour paid to bishops, thus: "Governors and officers do not enjoy so much honour as the bishop . . . . if he goes to the royal court, who takes precedence of him; if he visits matrons or the houses of the great no one is preferred to him in honour."—*Third Homily on the Acts. Migne. P. G.* vol. 60. col. 39–40.

he becomes haughty towards his inferiors, and is forced into the gulf of pride. So far I have described these things, but how injurious they are none can tell who has not had experience of them, yet these dangers and many more necessarily fall to the lot of one who lives in the midst of the world. Now he who loves solitude is free from all these, and should a dangerous thought at any time present to him such a picture, the impression is slight and easily extinguished, since the eyes supply from without no fuel for the flame. The monk, too, is solicitous only for himself, and if at times he is charged with the care of others, they are few in number. Even when numerous they are far less numerous than the faithful who fill the churches, and they give less anxiety to their prelate, not only because they are few, but also because they all lead a life free from secular business, and have neither wife nor children, nor any such care. Their obedience to their superiors and their common life render it more easy to know and to correct their faults, and the constant surveillance of their superiors is no small aid to their progress in virtue.

4. On the other hand, the majority of those who are subject to a bishop are entangled in worldly cares which render them more slothful in application to spiritual things. Hence it behoves the teacher, so to say, to sow the seed daily, that by his assiduity in preaching, the word of instruction may be retained by his hearers. For great wealth and power, and sloth, the consequence of luxury, and many other things suffocate the seed that has been sown ; and oftentimes the abundance of the thorns does not permit it even to reach the surface of the ground. Great trials, too, extreme poverty, constant insults, and the like—the contrary of the former—withdraw from application

to divine things. Moreover, priests cannot know even a small portion of the sins of the people. How could they, since they do not know the greater part of the people even by appearance? Such are the difficulties that beset a priest in what regards the people. But if you consider his duties in relation to God, so much more diligence do they require that you will regard the others as of no account. For what manner of man ought he to be who treats with God on behalf of a whole city?—a city, do I say? rather on behalf of the whole world—and who supplicates Him to be propitious to the sins, not only of the living, but also of the dead? For my part I should not consider the confidence of a Moses or of an Elias as sufficient for such a supplication. For as though he were charged with the interests of the whole world, and were the father of all, he approaches God to pray for the extinction of all wars, the settlement of all tumults, for peace and prosperity, and for the speedy removal of all the calamities, public and private, that hang over the people. He ought in all things to excel each of those for whom he prays, as it becomes a ruler to excel his subjects. For when he invokes the Holy Ghost, and offers the august sacrifice, and takes into his hands the Lord of all, in what rank shall we place him? What purity, what piety shall we require of him? Think what those hands ought to be which perform such a ministry; what that tongue which pronounces those words; how much more pure and holy than anything we can imagine that soul should be which receives so great a spirit. At that moment the angels attend on the priest, and the whole sanctuary and the space around the altar is filled with the heavenly powers to honour Him who lies thereon. And this is credible from the

nature of the sacrifice which is then offered. And I myself once heard a person relate that a certain venerable old man, accustomed to such visions, told him that he was once favoured with such a vision, and that at that moment he saw a great multitude of angels, as far as the eye could reach, clad in shining garments, surrounding the altar and bowing down just as soldiers might be seen to stand in presence of their king. And I am convinced of the truth of it. Another told me, not as what he had heard from others, but what he had himself seen and heard, that the souls of those who depart this life, after having partaken of the mysteries with a pure conscience, are attended hence by angels as a bodyguard when they breathe forth their soul on account of what they have received.

And do you not shudder to bring in a soul like mine to so great a mystery, and to promote to the dignity of the priesthood one clad in filthy garments, and such a one as Christ expelled from the number of His guests? * The soul of a priest should shine as a light illuminating the whole world. But my soul, by reason of a guilty conscience, is enveloped in such darkness that it hides itself, and cannot look with confidence on its Lord. Priests are the salt of the earth; but who would consent to bear with my folly and inexperience except you, whose affection for me is beyond measure?

And he who is raised to the dignity of so great a ministry should not only be pure, but he should also be prudent and of wide experience, and no less versed in secular affairs than those who are engaged in them, yet more free from all attachment than

* Matt. xxii, 13.

monks who dwell in the mountains. For as he has to deal with men who have wives and families, and a household of menials, who abound in wealth, manage the business of the State, and hold positions of authority, he ought to be versatile. I say versatile, not crafty, nor a flatterer, nor a hypocrite; frank and confident, and able to condescend to others when circumstances require it, and at once kind and firm. And he should not follow the same method in dealing with all the faithful, just as a physician should not prescribe the same medicine for all his patients, nor a captain have but one method of contending with the tempests; for this ship is tossed by continual tempests, and these tempests attack not merely from without, but also arise from within, and require much condescension and diligence.

5. Now all these several things have but one object: the glory of God and the edification of the Church. The contest in which monks engage is great, and their labour manifold; but if their toils be compared with those of the priesthood the difference will be seen to be as great as that between a subject and a king. For though in the case of monks the labour is great, soul and body share equally in the struggle, or rather a great deal of the work is done by the exercises of the body. Should the body not be robust, the alacrity of the mind remains alone, having no occasion to display itself in act, for frequent fasts, sleeping on the ground, watching, abstinence from baths, great labour, and other exercises calculated to mortify the body, are at once dispensed with when the body to be chastened is not robust. But in the case of priests the whole art pertains to the soul, and has no need of good health to display its virtue. For of what advantage can strength of body be, that a man may

not be froward, or passionate, or rash, but sober, vigilant, of good behaviour, and possessed of all the other virtues which the blessed Paul has mentioned in sketching the portrait of a good priest? * But this cannot be said of the virtue of a monk. For as jugglers require many instruments—wheels, ropes, swords—while the aspirant to perfection possesses his whole art within his mind, and needs no instrument from without, so in the case before us. The monk requires good health, a place suited to his manner of life, not too far from the haunts of men, yet in tranquil solitude and possessing a good climate, for nothing is so insupportable to one exhausted with fasting as a changeable climate.

6. And what trouble they have to provide themselves with clothing and food by the labour of their own hands, I need not now mention.

But the priest has need of none of these things, for he lives simply, sharing in all that is not sinful, and he keeps his whole science treasured up in his own mind. Now if any man admires a life of solitude, away from the society of men, I too regard it as a proof of endurance, but I hold that it is not a sufficient proof of perfect strength of soul. For one who sits at the helm while the vessel is in the harbour has not yet given solid proof of his skill, but one who can manage his ship in the midst of the ocean while the tempest rages deserves to be called an excellent captain.

7. Hence a monk who lives in solitude is not to be over-much admired and praised because he is not disturbed, nor falls into many grievous faults. For there is nothing to disturb and excite his mind. But if one who throws himself into the turmoil, and is

* 1 Tim. iii, 2.

obliged to bear the sins of the people, perseveres unshaken, firm and steadfast, governing his mind in the tempest as in the calm, he deserves applause and admiration, for he has given sufficient proof of his virtue. Do not wonder then that few speak against me, since I shun the forum and the society of the public, for I should not deserve admiration for not sinning while asleep, or for not falling if I do not wrestle, or for not being wounded if I do not engage in battle. Who, pray, could speak of me and make known my miseries? Is it this roof or this cell? But they cannot speak. Is it my mother, who best of all knows what concerns me? But I am not always with her, and no quarrel has arisen between us; and even so, a mother is not so devoid of love and affection for the child she bore, brought forth and reared, as to blame and accuse him publicly without reason and without constraint; yet if anyone will examine my character carefully, he will find in it many weak points, as you cannot but know, though more than others you are wont to praise me to everybody. And that you may see that I do not speak thus from a sense of modesty, call to mind how often I said to you, when we spoke of this subject, that if I had to choose in what station I should most wish to be conspicuous, in the government of the Church or in the monastic state, I should a thousand times prefer the former. Nor did I ever cease to praise in your presence those who were capable of fulfilling that office properly. Now no man will deny that I would not have declined an office which I used to praise, had I felt competent to undertake it. But what was I to do? For nothing is less appropriate in the government of the Church than sloth and negligence, which some look on as an

admirable kind of asceticism, but which I regard as a cloak for incapacity, and with it I hide most of my faults, and do not permit them to be seen. For a man accustomed to ease and repose, however excellent his ability, is confused and perplexed by inexperience, and inexperience takes away not the least portion of his natural ability. But if he be deficient in ability, and at the same time inexperienced in such affairs, on taking in hand this administration he will be no better than a statue. Hence it is that but few of those who come from that school to these contests are successful. The greater number are found wanting and lose courage, and are obliged to submit to many unpleasant and painful things. Nor is this strange. For when the contest and the training have not the same object, the combatant is no better than one untrained. One who enters these lists must first of all despise glory, and be above anger, and possess great prudence. Now those who embrace a monastic life have no opportunity to exercise themselves in these things. They have not many to excite them to anger, that so they may learn to control it; nor to praise and admire them, that they may learn to despise popular applause; nor do they attach great importance to prudence so necessary in ecclesiastical affairs. When they come then to contests, of which they had no experience, they are perplexed, and dazed, and helpless, and, besides making no progress in virtue, oftentimes they lose what they already possessed.

8. Basil. What then? Is it men of the world immersed in business, and burdened with temporal cares, inured to brawls and quarrels, full of all manner of craft and accustomed to luxury, that we must charge with the government of the Church?

Chrysostom. Allow me, please, my dear friend. When we are looking for priests, such men should not be so much as thought of. But we should look for one who, while living and associating with the people, can preserve, intact and unsullied, purity and calmness, and sanctity and patience, and sobriety, and the other virtues of monks, better than monks themselves. For if a man, though subject to many faults, remains in solitude and associates with none, he can conceal them and render them of little consequence; but if he takes a public position, he will make himself ridiculous and will incur greater danger. And this would have been my fate had not the providence of God promptly averted the danger. In a public position such a man cannot escape notice, but his whole character becomes known. And as fire tries metals, so the test of the clerical state tries of what temper are the souls of men. If a man is passionate, pusillanimous, vain, boastful, or the like, everything is revealed and his faults soon laid bare; nor are they merely laid bare, but they are rendered more dangerous and inveterate. For as the wounds of the body become more difficult to heal if rubbed, so the diseases of the soul, if rubbed and irritated, become more inflamed and lead those who are subject to them into greater sins. For if one does not pay attention he is urged on to a love of glory, to boasting and to a love of riches. He is drawn into luxury and relaxation and indolence, and by degrees into the greater evils which spring from these.

For there are many obstacles which weaken the fervour of the soul and slacken its progress towards godliness, and first amongst them is conversation with women. For it is impossible for the bishop

who is charged with the care of the entire flock to attend to men only and neglect women, for they require more care on account of their tendency to sin. It behoves him who holds the office of bishop to bestow, if not more, at least equal care on their welfare. It is necessary to visit them when sick, to console them in their sorrows, to rebuke them when indolent, and to assist them in their difficulties. Now in all this the wicked one can easily find an opportunity of effecting an entrance, unless a man guards himself with the greatest care. For the look not merely of a lewd, but even of a modest woman makes an impression on and disturbs the soul; flattery softens, honours enslave, and love, the cause of all good things, springs up and becomes the source of every evil to those who do not use it rightly. Sometimes, too, continual cares blunt the edge of the mind and make him who had wings become heavier than lead, and passion attacks and envelopes as it were in darkness all within.

Who can enumerate the other mischiefs, the calumnies, the insults, the complaints made by the great and by the lowly, by the wise and by the unwise?

9. The whole of the latter class are given to fault-finding, and do not easily accept an excuse. A good bishop then ought not to look on these things as unimportant, but he should justify himself to all in respect to the charges made against him, with much meekness and gentleness, pardoning them for their unreasonable accusations, rather than treating them with indignation and anger. For if the Blessed Paul was afraid lest his disciples should suspect him of theft, and for that reason made choice of others to assist him in the dispensation of money, "Lest any man," says he, "should blame us in this abun-

dance which is administered by us," * why should not we take every means to remove injurious suspicions, even though they be false, absurd and altogether inconsistent with our reputation?

There is no sin from which we are so free as St Paul was from theft. Though so free from such misconduct, yet he did not overlook the suspicion of the people, though most unreasonable and foolish. For it would have been madness to entertain such a suspicion about that blessed and venerable man. None the less he removed the occasion of such a foolish suspicion, which could never have occurred to any one in his senses. Nor did he make little of the folly of the people, and say, "Who would ever think of entertaining such a suspicion about me, for all honour and admire me on account of my miracles and on account of the uprightness of my life?" On the contrary, he foresaw and anticipated that evil suspicion, and plucked it up by the roots, or rather, he did not suffer it even to bud. Why? "Providing," he says, "good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." †

Such, and even greater, care should be taken, not only to uproot and hinder bad reports from spreading, but even to foresee whence they may arise, and cut off the occasion of them from the first, and not wait until they increase and circulate among the people. For it is then no easy matter, but very difficult, if not impossible, to remove them, nor can it be done with impunity, as it may be to the detriment of many. But how long will I go on pursuing what cannot be attained? To enumerate all the difficulties in that office would be like attempting to

* 2 Cor. viii, 20. † Rom. xii, 17.

measure the sea. For even if a priest is free from all passion, an impossible supposition, in order to correct others for their faults he is obliged to endure hardships without number. Now if you add to this one's own faults, see what an abyss of anxieties and cares, and what one has to endure who endeavours to correct his own faults and those of others.

10. Basil. But a moment ago you said you had no trouble, and were free from care because you lead a solitary life.

Chrysostom. Indeed, I have troubles even at present. For how can a man, while leading this painful life, be free from cares and from contests. But the labour of crossing the boundless sea and that of passing over a river is not the same; yet such is the difference between these two kinds of cares. Were I capable of assisting others, I should be glad to do so, and this would be the object of my earnest prayers. But since I cannot, I shall think it enough if I succeed in saving myself and escaping the waves.

Basil. Do you think then that this is a great thing? And do you suppose that you can save yourself if you help no one else?

Chrysostom. You have well and truly spoken, said I. I do not think it possible for a man to be saved who has never done anything for the salvation of others. It profited not the slothful servant that he did not waste his talent.* On the contrary, he lost it, because he did not turn it to account and bring it back doubled. Yet I think my punishment shall be lighter, when charged with having done nothing for the salvation of others, than if I had ruined both myself and others by becoming worse after having

* Matt. xxv, 24.

received so great a dignity. As I am, I think my punishment will be such as my sins deserve; but had I undertaken to govern others, it would have been not only twice or thrice, but many times as great, on account of my having scandalized many and having offended God, who had honoured me and raised me to such a diginty.

11. For this reason God severely rebukes the Israelites, and declares them deserving of greater punishment because they sinned after having received many favours from Him, saying in one place, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities." * And again: "I raised up your sons for prophets, and your young men for sanctification." †

And long before the time of the prophets, wishing to show that the sins of priests are punished more severely than the sins of the laity, he commanded that for priests as great a sacrifice should be offered as for the entire people. ‡ Now this signifies that the sins of priests require a greater expiation, and as great as those of all the people together. But they would not require a greater atonement, were they not more grievous. Now they are more grievous, not by nature, but are rendered weighty by the dignity of the priest who dares to commit them. And why speak of men who hold this office, even a priest's daughters, § who had no share in the priestly office, were subject to a more severe punishment for their sins in consequence of their father's dignity? Now their sins were the same as those of the daughters

* Amos iii, 2.

† Amos. ii. 11—The Vulgate reading is: Your young men for Nazarites.

‡ Lev. iv, 3–14. § Lev. xxi, 9.

of laymen, for in both cases the sin was fornication, yet their punishment was more rigorous.

12. Do you see then how abundantly God shows that He requires far greater satisfaction from rulers than from subjects? For, of a truth, He who on her father's account punishes a priest's daughter more severely than others, will not inflict on him who is the occasion of that greater penalty, a punishment like that of others, but one much more severe. And most justly, for the harm is not confined to himself alone, but he brings to ruin the souls of the weaker who look to him for example. This is what Ezechiel wished to inculcate when he separates the rams from the sheep in the judgment. *

Do I seem to you, pray, to have had reason to be afraid? For, in addition to what I have said, though at present I require to make a great effort not to be completely overcome by my passions, yet I bear up under the effort, and I do not shrink from the contest.

Even at present I am overcome by vanity, but I often recover myself, and I perceive that I have been overcome, and sometimes I rebuke myself for having been reduced to slavery. Even now irregular concupiscences assail me, but the flame which they enkindle is weaker, as no fuel for the fire is received through my eyes. As to speaking and listening to detraction, I am altogether free from that, for I have no one to converse with, and these walls are dumb. But I cannot refrain from anger with the same ease, though there are none to excite me to it; for many a time the remembrance of disagreeable persons and of their actions occurs to my mind, and makes my

* Ezech. xxxiv, 17.

heart swell with indignation. But I am not completely overcome, for I quickly subdue its ardour and persuade it to be still; saying to myself that it is unreasonable and a mark of great wretchedness to trouble myself about the faults of others while neglecting my own. Now were I to undertake a public office and involve myself in many annoyances, I should not possess such an admonition, nor be able to make reflections so instructive. But just as those who are carried down a precipice by a stream, or in any other way, can forsee the destruction towards which they are tending, but cannot think of any means of escape: so were I to fall into such a turmoil of passions, I should see my responsibility increasing every day, but to enter into myself as I now do, and curb the stormy passions of my soul, would be no longer so easy as before. For my soul is weak and pusillanimous, and easily overcome, not only by the aforesaid passions, but also by envy, the most malignant of them all. I can bear neither insult nor honours with moderation, but I am excessively elated by the latter and cast down by the former. Wild beasts when strong and active easily overcome those who attack them, especially if the latter are weak and without skill; but if they are overcome by hunger their rage is calmed, and its force in a great measure extinguished, so that one who is not particularly brave can undertake to combat and overcome them. Thus he who weakens the passions of the soul makes them subject to right reason; and on the contrary, he who carefully nourishes them renders them more difficult to resist, and causes them to become so formidable that he spends his whole life in servitude and fear. What then, is the food of those wild beasts? The food of vainglory is honour and praise; that of pride, is great power and

rank; that of envy is the reputation of others; that of avarice, the liberality of donors; that of lust is immortification and frequent conversation with women, and so of the rest. If I go into the world, these wild beasts will set upon me and rend my soul, they will become more formidable and more difficult to resist. While I remain here in retirement, by an effort, it is true, I subdue them, yet by the grace of God I do subdue them, so that they can do nothing but growl. For that reason I dwell in this cell, visiting, associating and conversing with no one; I endure all manner of reproaches, though I would indeed gladly refute them, and feel hurt and pained that I cannot. For it is no easy matter to enjoy my present security and at the same time to mingle in society. Wherefore, caught as I am in such difficulties, I beg of you to have compassion on me instead of blaming me. But I cannot persuade you to do so. It is then time to disclose to you my secret. To many, perhaps, it will seem incredible, yet I will not shrink from mentioning it. Even should what I am about to say be taken as a proof of a bad conscience and of many sins, as God who shall be my Judge knows all with the greatest accuracy, what advantage can I derive from the ignorance of men? What then is that secret? From the day when you communicated to me that suspicion, such fear and despondency has seized upon my soul that my body has often been on the point of being dissolved. For reflecting on the glory of the Spouse of Christ, on her sanctity, her spiritual beauty, her wisdom, her comeliness, and considering my own miseries, I never ceased bewailing her misfortune and my own. With sighs and sobs I often said to myself. Who has devised this plan? What evil hath the

Church of God done? What has so incensed the anger of her Lord that she should be delivered up to me, the most ignoble of men, and should suffer such a disgrace?

Frequently reflecting on this, I could not bear the thought of a thing so strange, and like one in a fit I lay speechless, unable to see or hear. When this bewilderment passed away—for it sometimes ceased — tears and prostration followed; and after a flood of tears, fear returning again, disturbed my mind and filled it with confusion and commotion. In such a tempest I have spent the time that has since elapsed; but you knew it not, and you thought I was living in tranquillity. But now I will endeavour to disclose to you the tempest of my soul, and then perhaps you will pardon me and cease to blame me. How then, how shall I discover it to you? If you desired to know it fully, I could not disclose it in any other way than by laying bare my heart. But as that is impossible, I will try as far as I can by a faint illustration to describe the darkness of my sorrow. From the illustration you must infer its magnitude.

Let us suppose, then, that to a certain man there was espoused a lady, the daughter of a king, who ruled the universe, and that she was of such unspeakable beauty as to transcend human nature and far surpass the entire female sex; and that besides she was endowed with such virtue of soul as to excel all men, past, present and future, and that in moral rectitude she exceeded the limits of perfection; that the beauty of her countenance cast all the beauty of her form into the shade; and that her suitor loved her not only for these charms, but that his affection for her was so great as to exceed that of the most ardent lovers that ever existed; and let us suppose that

while in that mood this ardent lover chanced to hear that the woman he loved was about to be wedded to a mean outcast, of low degree, deformed in body, and the most depraved of mankind.

Have I presented to you a faint illustration of my grief? Is it enough to proceed thus far with the illustration? I think it is enough to make known my sorrow, and this was the only purpose for which I used it. But to show you the extent of my fear and consternation let me use another illustration.

Picture to yourself an armament composed of infantry, cavalry and marines; the sea covered with ships of war, the plains and mountain ridges occupied by troops of foot and horse, their armour gleaming in the sun, and the sun-beams glinting from helmets and shields, the air filled with the din of spears and neighing of steeds, earth and sea concealed from view, and naught visible on every side save brass and steel. Opposite to these picture to yourself a hostile force of wild and savage men. Suppose that the battle is imminent. Then let some one take a peasant boy, unacquainted with aught save the shepherd's reed and crook, and put on him armour of brass; let him lead him throughout the host, and point out to him the companies and captains, archers, slingers, officers, generals, men-at-arms, horsemen, lancers, the ships of war, the admirals, the marines and whole naval artillery. Let him also point out the whole force of the enemy; their fierce looks, their strange armour, and their immense numbers, the ravines too, the steep precipices and the mountain defiles. Let him also point out amongst the opposing force horses flying, as it were, by magic, and mail-clad men wafted through the air, and the power of all manner of enchantment displayed. Let him describe to him the circumstances

of war; the cloud of shafts and the hail of javelins, the mist and the darkness, and the deep gloom caused by volleys of arrows intercepting the rays of the sun, the dust blinding the eyes no less than the darkness; the streams of blood, the shrieks of the wounded and the shouts of the combatants, the piles of dead, the chariot wheels dripping with gore, horses and riders stumbling over the heaps of slain, the earth strewn in confusion with blood, bows, arrows; horses' hoofs and men's heads blent together; arms, necks, legs, breasts, hacked; swords besmeared with brains, and an eye encircling an arrow's broken point. Let him describe also the horrors of naval warfare; the ships, some on fire in the midst of the waves, others sinking with all hands; the roar of the waves, the clamour of the sailors and the shouts of the soldiers; the foam of mingled blood and brine dashing into the ships; corpses, some on the decks, some sinking in the deep, some floating on the surface, some swept towards the beach, some tossed upon the billows and stopping the vessels in their course. After describing all the horrors of war, let him add the hardships of captivity and of slavery more terrible than death itself. And when he has described all this, let him bid him mount his steed at once and take the command of all that armed force. Do you imagine the young man could bear even the description of these things, and that he would not at once faint away at the very first sight of them?

13. And do not imagine that my description is exaggerated, nor suppose that because we are shut up in the body as in a prison and cannot see the invisible, what I have said is excessive. Could you with your eyes behold the dark array and fierce onset of the devil, you would witness a much greater and more

dreadful conflict. Here there is neither brass nor iron, nor horses, nor chariot wheels, nor fire, nor weapons, nor such visible arms, but other more terrible engines of war. These enemies need neither breastplate nor shield, nor swords nor spears. But the very sight of that accursed army is enough to fill the soul with terror unless it be very courageous, and unless besides courage it enjoys the special protection of God. Were it possible that, divested of the body, or in the body, you could see clearly and without dismay the whole army of the devil and the war he wages against us, you would behold, not indeed torrents of blood nor dead bodies, but such destruction of souls, and wounds so deadly that the foregoing description of a battle would seem the amusement and game of children rather than war, so great is the number of those who are wounded every day. Nor do the wounds produce the same kind of death, but one as far different as the soul differs from the body. For when the soul is wounded and falls, it does not lie senseless like the body, but thenceforth it pines away with the torture of a bad conscience in this life, and at its departure from hence it is delivered up at judgment to everlasting punishment. And if one feels no pain from the wounds inflicted by the devil, by his insensibility to pain he suffers greater hurt. For one who does not feel the smart of the first wound, easily receives a second and a third, for that wicked foe, if he finds the soul prostrate and making no account of its former wounds, never ceases to strike until our last breath.

And if you examine the manner of the conflict, you will find it more fierce and more varied. For no one knows so many forms of deceit and stratagem as that foul wretch, and hence he possesses greater

power. Nor can anyone entertain a hatred so implacable against his greatest enemies as that wicked one entertains against mankind. And if one considers the ardour with which he engages in the fray, he will understand that it is ridiculous to make a comparison in that respect between him and men. If you single out the fiercest and most savage beasts and compare their rage to his, you will find them tame and humane in comparison, such rage does he breathe when he attacks our souls. Moreover, the time of battle in the one case is short, and in that short time there are many respites, for night-fall and the fatigue of slaughter and the need of refreshment, and many other circumstances give the soldier time to pause : so that he can put off his armour and breathe a little, and refresh himself with food and drink, and by such means recover his former strength. But in the case of that wicked one it is never possible to put off one's armour, nor to sleep, if one wishes to preserve oneself from wounds. One must choose between two alternatives : either to fall and perish if one puts off one's armour, or to stand constantly in arms and on the watch. For the enemy with his army stands constantly watching our negligence, and making greater efforts for our destruction than we do for our safety. And his being invisible, and his making his attack on a sudden, are the cause of countless evils to such as are not always on the watch, and hence this warfare is more perplexing than the other.

Do you wish then that I should become a leader of the soldiers of Christ ? But this would be to act as general for the devil. For when he whose duty it is to marshal and prepare others is the most inexperienced and weakest of all, by his want of skill he betrays the soldiers entrusted to him and acts the general for the devil rather than for Christ.

But why do you sigh and shed tears? For my case deserves not tears, but gladness and joy.

Basil. But not so my case, said he; but it deserves endless lamentation. Until now I was unable to fully realize the extent of the evil you have brought upon me. I came to you to know what defence I could make for you to those who blame you, and you send me away with a different cause for anxiety. I am no longer concerned about your justification, but about what defence I shall make to God for myself and for my sins. But I beg and entreat you if you have any concern for me, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of charity, if any bowels of commiseration," * stretch forth your hand to aid me by your words and acts, for you know it was by means of you I was brought into this danger. Do not bear to leave me even for a short time, but now more than formerly let us live together.

Chrysostom. On this I smiled, and said: In what can I co-operate with you, in what can I assist you amidst such a pressure of affairs? But be of good cheer, my dear friend, since it is agreeable to you, as often as you shall have leisure from your duties I will be with you, I will console you, and nothing that I can do shall be left undone. On this he arose, weeping more abundantly, and I embraced him on the cheek and bade him good-bye, bidding him bear his lot with courage. For I have confidence, said I in Christ, who called you and set you over His flock, that by means of this ministry you will obtain such confidence that when I am in danger on the last day you will receive me too into your everlasting tabernacle.

* Phil. ii, 1.

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